

LEGEND AND ROMANCE,

AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN.

BY RICHARD JOHNS,

LIEUT. ROYAL MARINES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ADVENTURE AND DISCOVERY

BY RICHARD J. BROWN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME II

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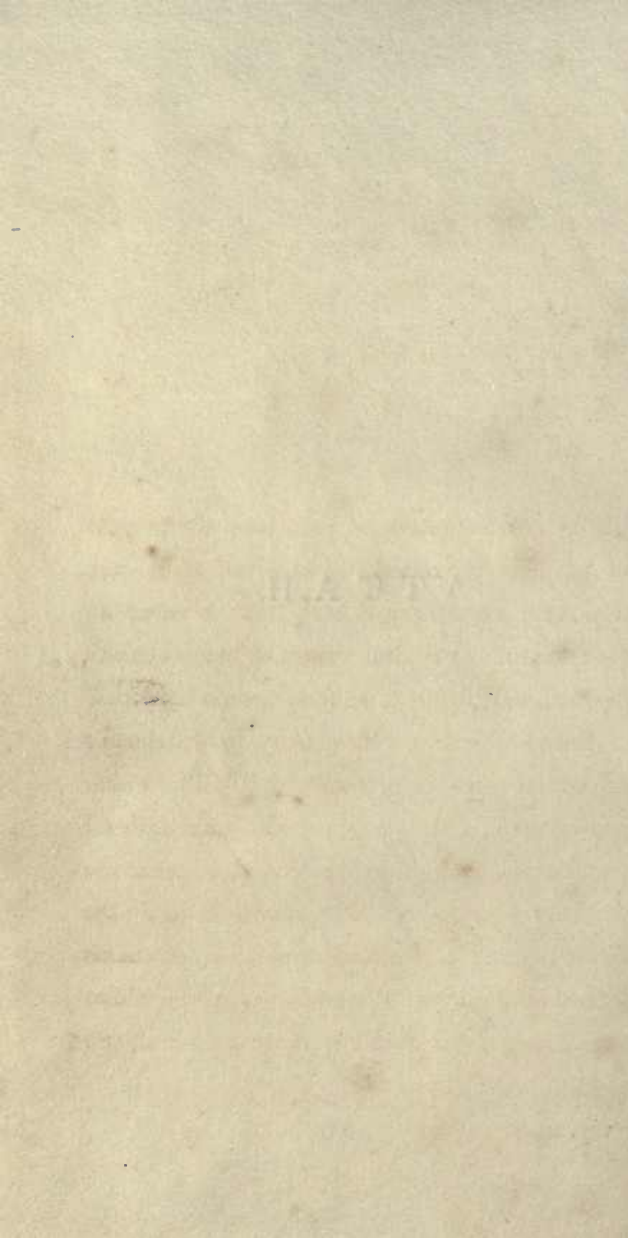
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LET not the moralist turn from the perusal of the following tale. The loves of a slave dealer and a negro girl may teach a lesson to civilization. The altar reared by hands beneath the consecrated pile is profaned, when the ritual of the church lends blasphemy to falsehood; let us then justly estimate that faith which proved inviolable through peril, suffering, and temptation, though artlessly pledged amid the shadowy glade of an African wilderness:—the forest's proud cathedral, whose leafy columns arched on high bore witness to the vow,—whilst the sighing of the evening breeze gave Nature's nuptial benediction.

Engaged on a predatory expedition in search of slaves, Carlos Menzenza, mate of the Teresa slaver, found himself bewildered in the intricacies of a densely wooded tract of country, some twenty miles inland on the banks of the Loan-go, a well-known river of Western Africa. At the period of which we write, slaving had not been reduced so completely to a system as at present, by the establishment of factories. The cargo of human misery is now as ready for embarkation as if it belonged to the most lawful traffic; and the slave stations on the coast are well known, not only to the slave *dealers*, but, strange to say, to the *suppressors* of the slave trade. We may, indeed, liken them to the dens of iniquity often suffered in the heart of a metropolis, regarded by the administrators of the laws as hot-beds of crime, yet allowed to exist in all the rankness of their influence; while the police, instead of being permitted to strike boldly at the sources of the evil, are ac-

tively engaged in vainly attempting to stop the outpourings of their corruption.

To return, however, to the subject that should now more properly engage our attention:—In the eighteenth century the crews of slavers, not finding a cargo awaiting them as at present, had often to aid native chiefs in the abduction of the wretched negros inhabiting the coast and country adjacent. The young Spaniard, whom we have already introduced to the reader as engaged in an expedition of this character, was the chief officer of a vessel belonging to his father. The elder Menzenza was as great a villain as ever commanded a slaver. Only those who have visited slave ships, and made themselves acquainted with the acts of those apostles of darkness—their captains, can fully comprehend how complete a demon the man must become who can be justly awarded such a diabolical distinction. The son, like a plant of beauty and healing springing from a

poisonous root, was happily the reverse of this sad picture of humanity ; and, but lately initiated into the unhallowed calling, his better nature not yet subdued, it was only by coercion that the young Menzenza could be compelled to aid his father in his desperate trade.

The Bard of Erin, in one of his impassioned and enthralling lays, wedding “ music to immortal verse,” tells us that,

“ When sinks the sun on Afric’s shore,
That instant all is night :”

Though this instant nightfall must be poetically, rather than literally understood, still, so speedily does the luminary of day withdraw its influence, that twilight is here but of short duration. Thus Carlos, finding himself alone in a perfect wilderness after sunset, almost regretted he had contrived to escape from his party, who were with certain chiefs kidnapping the unfortunate natives. Night drew on apace. To rejoin the seamen of the *Teresa* when their disgusting work was over,—the mate’s original intention,

—seemed now impossible. Willingly would he have sought them, and borne without repining the threats and reproaches which he well knew awaited him on meeting his father. To such trials of endurance he was accustomed ; but, to pass the night amid the haunts of the tiger and the hyena, he had not contemplated as the result of his desertion of the expedition. Already the low growl, shrill cry, and crush of underwood, told that the hungry prowl of the forest's savage denizens had commenced ; and Carlos, as his best means of defence from these dangerous intruders, made a circle of fires around the trunk of a lofty silk-cotton tree, and bestowed himself in its branches, which afforded him not only a post of security, but of observation.

The tired youth watched through the first hours of danger ; one solitary tiger had with stealthy and suspicious movements approached his fiery lines,—the fortification seemed efficient,—the animal uttered a loud sharp roar and disappeared. Considering the wildness of his

place of repose, it possessed more of comfort than might be imagined. The smoke arising from the burning of green boughs, kept off the tormenting mosquitoes ; and heavy dews cooled the weary frame of the benighted wanderer, however fraught with peril to the European constitution subjected to their influence.

About midnight, Carlos, after replenishing the fires, again ascended the branches of his friendly tree, and slept. It was sunrise ere the chatter of innumerable monkeys, the drone of insects, and the scream of birds, partially awoke him. Slumber still clung heavily to the eyelids of the young slaver, and he listlessly reclined in his leafy arbour, till a grand climax to his annoyances effected by one of the mimic men in his immediate neighbourhood, completely aroused him to waking consciousness. A monkey, larger and bolder than the rest, had proceeded to the extreme end of a bough which stretched over the sleeper, and brought the pressure of its rough bark on his neck.

With a start that almost precipitated him from his exalted position, Carlos sprang up; and, for the moment, imagined that the claw of a tiger, or the scarcely less savage grasp of his father, was at his throat. His mischievous persecutor fled; and, having recovered from his alarm, he calmly took a survey around ere he made his descent to terra firma. The fires had died away; not a burning ember was there remaining in the charred circle of blackness, which, like the magic ring of an enchanter, had borne him harmless through the perils of the night.

But did Carlos still dream? or was he indeed under the influence of some wizard's spell? Crouched at the foot of the tree, in an attitude of supplication, her dark stag-like eyes fixed on his bewildered gaze, he beheld a beautiful negro girl. Yes, reader, not unfrequently have we beheld beauty in the inhabitants of Western Africa, even where there has not been an admixture of European blood: but in the

young creature before him Carlos perceived traces of the half-caste,—the offspring of a native mother ; but one whose father claimed a white man's privilege—to betray, to oppress, and to abandon. Her dark but graceful form was slightly robed in the gaudy drapery of a Benin shawl ; her hair was plaited into fantastic wreaths ; and as her beautifully rounded arms were stretched towards Carlos, laden with bracelets of gold, mingled with amulets or *grigris* of ivory, she might have been likened to some dryad of those wilds, seeking to propitiate the white man with the more legitimate objects of his cupidity,—beseeching him to spare the hapless inhabitants of her native woods.

Carlos instantly descended, and, lifting the suppliant from her knees, tried to assure her that she had nought to dread from one who was, just then, as complete a fugitive as herself. Signs and a few words of a patois blending Spanish, Portuguese, English, and an African

dialect, gave him to understand that the girl, who called herself "Attah," belonged to the family of a chief whose village had been surprised, and a great portion of the able-bodied of his people carried off by the King of Loan-go, aided by the crew of the Teresa. Attah had fled, and made good her retreat in the confusion. Arriving at the tree, gladly she had availed herself of the protection which the fires afforded from the wild animals of the forest, though their appearance bespoke the hand of man not far distant; but her immediate fear having changed its character, rather than face the danger of being slain by the tiger or hyena, she there resolved to remain till daylight showed her if she had to dread the neighbourhood of a white man, or might appeal for protection to some native hunter benighted in the forest.

How strange is that sympathy which draws hearts together by ties as sudden as they are binding! Leaving the mystery of affinities to

be solved by galvanistic, magnetic, or metaphysical theories, we have only to state a rather singular fact. Attah had taken to the woods in fleeing from the slavers, and her first movement, on discerning an armed sailor in the tree, was to hide herself in a thicket; yet no sooner had she perfectly reconnoitred his youthful and open countenance,—unmarked by those deep lines which generally wrote villain on the brow of the few Europeans she had encountered,—than worn and scarcely able to resume her flight, and still in terror of the beasts of the forest, she resolved to try and make the stranger her friend, even at the risk of becoming his slave. Alas! this experiment is daily made in the circles of civilization; and often, unhappily, with a result far more dangerous to the trusting maiden than was here the case.

We know not how long Carlos might have poured forth assurances of friendly bearing

towards his new acquaintance, had not sickness, giddiness, and prostration of strength warned the youth that his sleep in the night dews had brought its almost invariable consequence. He felt the first symptoms of fever.— Attah knew the intricacies of the wood, which seemed as much her home as it was the abode of the monkeys in the trees above their heads, — or rather let us say, when speaking of the gentler, if not in the present instance, fairer sex, the lovely birds of gorgeous plumage resting among their spreading branches when the said monkeys permitted them to repose: thus, no sooner had the negro girl perceived the illness of her companion, than she made him understand that she would take him where help might be procured, if he, on his part, assured her of protection from the violence of his countrymen.

Carlos was too well acquainted with the custom of slavers when employed in kid-

napping excursions, to suppose his father and the Teresa's sailors were yet in the neighbourhood: by that time they must have proceeded to the coast with the slaves they had obtained; and, without hesitation, he acceded to the arrangement of Attah. Together they made their way through the tangled underwood, till a labyrinth of tracks, diverging in all directions, marked their approach to habitations; and an open space, or clearing, as it is called in America, gave to their view a few circular mud-built huts surrounded by so dense a crowd of natives, that their low, conical roofs were alone perceptible amid the congress. A small branch of the Loango river was apparent in the distance, on the banks of which many canoes had been drawn up; around these, groups of naked children were at play; and altogether there was presented before them a perfect picture of a native African village when excited by what is designated a war-palaver.

The allies of the chief who had been despoiled of his subjects, or slaves,—the terms are synonymous in Western Africa,—had arrived too late to protect and aid him against his enemies, or even to pursue the ravagers with a chance of recovering the prisoners: by that time they were under the guns of the slavers at the mouth of the river. This, however, did not forbid severe reprisal on the Loango coast king as soon as his supporters, the white men, had departed; and, if violence of gesticulation and vehemence of discussion bespoke determination of purpose, the work of the last night would soon be bitterly avenged.

Thus was the constant supply of slaves kept up. Supposing the present injured party to become, in his turn, a successful assailant, it might even happen that he would make sale of his prisoners to the very slaver which had caused the original onslaught, on her next return to the coast.

But we have left Carlos and Attah gazing on the scene we have described, from the last thicket that would conceal them. The Spaniard, scarcely able to support himself from the rapid progress of fever, was not a little alarmed at the crowd of enraged natives before him; and even his companion felt great anxiety as to the reception that might await them, as, though this village had not suffered from the ravages of the previous night, it was full of fugitives from a town on the other side of the forest, which had been utterly destroyed. How then could she expect to convince these unfortunates, that Carlos was not one of the spoilers of their habitations and kindred? Making a sign to her hapless *protégé* to remain in concealment, Attah proceeded alone towards the huts; and he could perceive that her appearance created a general movement among the crowd, which, opening in its centre, allowed an aged but athletic negro to come forward, as if to receive her. Welcomed with apparent delight by the old

chief, she was soon hidden from the view of Carlos by a dense multitude of black forms. His moments of suspense were, however, few ; a yell burst from the savages ;—a rush was made towards the thicket ;—and too ill for flight, almost reckless as to life, Carlos was an unresisting captive in the power of the enraged Africans. Yet the poor “ white man ” was not friendless. Death was threatening him from a hundred uplifted knives ;—the poisoned spear was at his heart, and the war-club was brandished above his head ; but Attah was sobbing on his bosom. The affection and devotion of the artless negro girl might not have long protected him from death, had not the chief, before mentioned, interfered. Addressing himself to the natives, he appeased their clamours by a few impressive words ; but, little to Carlos’ satisfaction, the significant application of the savage’s hand to the arms, legs, and finally to the neck of his prisoner, seemed to indicate that he was reserved for a cruel and lingering sacrifice.

Though naturally brave, fever had made such inroads on his strength, mentally as well as corporeally, that the destined victim soon lost all consciousness. His eyes seemed closing in death as he sank on the ground. When he next awoke to a knowledge of himself and those around him, how changed was his position !

The aged chief Tompa was the father of Attah's mother, and rejoiced and prided himself that his daughter's temporary sojourn with the master of a palm-oil ship, had connected his family, by the birth of a girl, with the powerful white men whom he almost worshipped ; the size of their ships, and the thunder of their guns, having made him consider them superhuman. His grand-daughter was consequently more highly prized by him than the weaker sex generally were by his compatriots. The interest Attah took in the fate of Carlos engaged his sympathy ; and resolving on the rescue of the prisoner, though not daring

openly to protect him, he obtained a respite of a few hours for the destined victim, under pretence of putting him to death with greater formality, but really intending to aid his escape ere the period fixed for his sacrifice. The fires that were to have witnessed the agonies of the white man, that night were lighted in vain. Carlos had fled, and Attah was the companion of his flight. Tompa had recourse to all his influence and ingenuity to exonerate himself from suspicion of treason to the cause ; and aided by the subtilty of an accomplice,—no less than Tabooa, a Fetish-man,—the disappointed and enraged savages were appeased. This worthy positively assured them that white men could only be kept between stone walls ; and that the hut which had contained the prisoner, being formed of mud from a river communicating with the sea,—the element on which white men were born, and always lived in their floating houses,—such a prison had no power to immure him, rather would it aid him in his escape ; and

the only wonder was, that, instead of being content with taking off a single African girl, the slave mate had not carried away half the village.

We must now return to Carlos, who, while in a state of delirium, had been conveyed to a Fetish-house, or rude temple, under the charge of Attah. In an apartment of this hut, which was completely embowered by the cotton and tamarind tree, he reclined on a couch of leaves, his head supported by the gentle Attah; while she applied to his lips the cool water of the freshly gathered cocoa-nut,—a luxurious draught, which seemed, at the moment, to have recalled him to existence. When the Spaniard closed his eyes on the world, he had beheld a crowd of angry and hideous faces frowning around him;—he now only saw gazing inquiringly on him,—watching his first look of life and consciousness,—one fond girl whose smile told of hope, of joy, and of safety. Though the fiery ordeal of fever was not yet

past, it quickly subsided under the operation of a species of vapour-house, used in all illnesses by the negroes ; nor were the incantations of the Fetish-man spared during the cure, he having with Tompa joined Attah in her kind offices. Carlos recovered ; and though constitution perhaps had more to do with his convalescence than the inspiration of Tabooa, or the perspiration of the medical process, it must be allowed that the gentle negro girl's soft glances of love and devotion may have possessed the sick man with so great a desire to live, as to have given him strength in throwing off the languor of disease.

For many days yet, Carlos quietly submitted to Fetish conjurations at sunrise and sunset ; and never did physician make a more solemn entrée than Tabooa. He would approach his patient with an aspect stern enough to frighten away any devil that might, according to the operator's idea, possess the sufferer ; — but it appeared the demon required to be

grappled with. Not content with attempting to draw the pains of disease from the frame by the mere approximating motion of hands,—like a possessor of animal magnetism,—the negro at the end of each visit actually grasped, and shampooed, and kneaded the firm body of the white man, at the same time affecting to draw a heterogeneous assemblage of sundries from the patient. Indeed, had the distemper of Carlos been caused by repletion after feasting on birds' claws and beaks, with a second course of sharks' teeth and fish-bones,—which by some jugglery actually fell from the hands of the strange practitioner in rapid succession,—no doubt he might have been persuaded that to the Fetish-man he was indebted for recovery.

Rejoiced was Carlos when Attah reclaimed him from Tabooa, and put him under a course of her gentle ministering. Each day she brought him the ripe plantain and banana; her eyes beaming gladness as she regarded

the now convalescent youth partake of her forest fare. The noisy gesticulation and loud laugh, so common to African girls, were hushed, —she would speak softly to him, watching his every look when waking; and, after singing him to sleep, would continue her murmuring chant half the long night, that its melody might still lull the slumberer. But time wore on, and Carlos was completely recovered: yet did he seldom dare to leave the precincts of the Fetish-house;—for, had he been discovered by the natives of the neighbouring hamlet, his death was certain, and his protectors, in spite of their princely and priestly offices, might have shared his fate.

To account for Tompa and Tabooa having taken the part of the white man against their compatriots, it must be understood that both the chief and Fetish-man had long watched for an opportunity of forming a connection with the slavers frequenting the coast. This it had not been their fortune to effect, in consequence

of the Loango river Africans being obliged to succumb to the greater power of the coast hordes; who had as yet only drawn supplies of slaves from them, by the right of the strongest, in the manner we have described. Now, these worthies wished, on their part, to make more amicable arrangements with the slave dealers; they considering that if the people of whom they had the regal and spiritual charge *must* be kidnapped, their chief and priest ought to have the privilege of selling them. In the present case the coadjutors had outwitted themselves, not supposing that Carlos was so little in favour with his companions; but, till they were aware of this, his safety was their first consideration. A Fetish-house, which had for years been sacred to the presence of a ponderous log of ebony fashioned into a mis-shapen semblance of humanity, had thus been readily appropriated by the Fetish-man to the Spaniard; and his godship was obliged to put up with the outer

apartment of his hut, while the inner received the white man.

Occasionally Carlos and Attah would steal forth from their concealment, and wander in the recesses of the forest,—the scene of their first meeting, and now the witness of their mutual love. Yes! the artless affection of the negro girl—for thus, despite her half European parentage, we may call her,—was ardently returned by the grateful youth; and we question if he sighed for the comforts of civilized life, except indeed as it involved a more commodious habitation, and greater security from danger. But these hours of endearment were not to last long. Tompa and Tabooa had assured themselves of laying the master of the Teresa under a considerable obligation by protecting one of his sailors, when their only merit in his eyes would be the giving up to him a deserter from his ship. The first officer belonging to a slaver, which position Carlos made them understand he held, they supposed

must have sufficient interest with the captain to ensure his friends a profitable share in the slave trade of the river, and most anxiously did they look out for the coming of the elder Menzenza. Too soon did he arrive to blight the tranquil happiness of his son, who, though not without a spirit of enterprise,—which he had exhibited on many occasions during distant voyages when his father's ship was engaged in fair traffic,—would have been well content to forget the name of Spaniard, and make his home for ever with his gentle Attah, rather than again return to the Teresa.

At the close of a happy day about eight months from the commencement of our tale, Carlos and Attah were retracing their steps after a long ramble in the recesses of the forest. The dreamy hum of the wild bee as it hastened home with its honeyed store; the voice of the fringilla in the leafy arbours above their heads; the tortoise creeping slowly

to his hole under some bank or trunk of a decayed tree,—perhaps scarcely ten feet off, but which he might yet despair of reaching until night-fall;—the monkey joyously chattering in the boughs of the tall palm; and the snake, as he glided his sinuous course amid the underwood, looking too beautiful to harm;—all added the charm of sympathy to the bliss of the lovers. Half embracing and often stumbling in their rugged path by gazing into each other's eyes, rather than on the way before them, they approached the Fetish-house: the door was opened ere the hand of Carlos had reached it, and his father stood before him.

The necessity of effecting as quick a passage as possible with his human cargo had prevented Menzenza making a lengthened search for his son at the period of his disappearance. Not that he cared for his loss on account of any love he bore the youth; the man who traded in the severing ties,—in tearing the daughter from the mother, and the boy from his father's

protecting arms,—was at least consistent in setting but light value on the claims of consanguinity: but Carlos was a good sailor, and he could not spare him;—thus his first consideration on returning to the Loango river was to recover the runaway. The boats were quickly manned; and, with his crew well armed, he soon reached the scene of his former enterprise. Tompa, whom he found in his village, gave him all the information he required, as to the retreat of Carlos; only bargaining that he should be taken down the river at night, that the natives might not know the part their chief had acted in protecting the white man. The old negro, on discovering that he had harboured a deserter, was now anxious to do all in his power to give him up, that the slave dealer might be inclined to treat favourably with him in future transactions.

Menzenza, as might be supposed, was not alone when he confronted his son. In a moment Carlos was surrounded by a boat's crew.

Wresting a cutlass from the hand of one of his assailants, he attempted to cut his way to the bush where Attah had in the first alarm fled; but he was overpowered by numbers, and obliged to yield, though not till he was wounded, and his sword,—arrested in its sweep by the branch of a tree,—broken to the hilt. The abuse his enraged father now heaped on him he bore without a murmur; and, separated most likely for ever from Attah, he comforted himself in the belief that she had escaped, as the sailors who had made search for her returned unsuccessful.

The wretched prisoner, his arms pinioned behind him, the blood streaming down his pale face from a gash in his head, was placed between two seamen, and hurried through the forest in the direction of the river. “Attah is safe,”—murmured Carlos to himself as he attempted to free his mouth of the blood which now freely flowed into it. “I can bear anything so she is not a sufferer.” At that moment

the light branches of the dwarf acacia he was passing were pushed aside, and Attah shared the captivity of her lover.

“Secure the girl,” cried Menzenza; “the wench is good-looking, and will be worth two hundred dollars in the colonies.”

But she cared not to escape. After a while, her hands, which they had at first tied, were loosed; and she walked by the side of Carlos, wiping the blood from his face, and, whenever they halted, she might be said to have washed his wound with her tears. But we must hasten our tale; — at once conveying the hapless pair on board the *Teresa*. A slave cargo had this time awaited her arrival: in a few days she was ready for sea; and Carlos, cured of his wound, resumed his duty in the ship. His father, being somewhat softened by the prospect of making a fair bargain of Attah, consented to believe what the young mate in truth asserted,—that his first intention had not been to desert, though, once

tasting the sweets of liberty, he had certainly shown himself but little willing to return to his ship.

Captain Menzenza, whose lust was but for gold, discouraged all intimacy between his sailors and the unfortunate female captives ; as, in one instance, a contrary system had led to serious disagreements among his people. The separation between the male and female slaves was ever strictly enforced ; and even his mates had so little intercourse with the latter, that Carlos found it difficult to convey the comparative luxuries of the cabin to the miserable Attah, who was confined between the slave-decks among the other women. His father's eye was continually upon him, and unreserved communication they had none : but a look of continued affection when it was the poor girl's turn to inhale the air upon deck, — a word or even a sign of recognition from her lover as he took his measured walk as officer of the watch, — yet often

repaid her for hours of wretchedness in the almost suffocating atmosphere of the slavehold.

The vessel's destination was the Havanna ; but, a few days after leaving the river, a suspicious sail appeared in chase ; and the Teresa, then just getting into the influence of the south-east trade-wind, was obliged to run freely before it,—thus hazarding her crossing the line in a latitude where calms so constantly prevail, that, in a ship only victualled for a short voyage, much inconvenience was likely to ensue. In addition to the dread of such a casualty, Menzenza found his efforts to escape the stranger ineffectual ; she was fast gaining on the Teresa ; and, whether proving pirate or slaver, in either case she would probably add to his difficulties, by robbing him of his stores and provisions.

In the African seas, ships are often sternly taught the great virtue of relieving the necessities of others, even in these days ; moreover,

slavers do not scruple to complete a cargo at the expense of their brethren in the trade, by picking a few fine slaves out of a weaker vessel. "Hand over hand" came the stranger, which turned out to be a craft as much superior in weight of metal to the *Teresa*, as she had already proved herself in sailing. Guns were fired in rapid succession to bring her chase to ; and, on coming within hail, the hoarse command conveyed through the speaking trumpet of "Send a boat on board !" could not be disobeyed. Carlos was despatched on this disagreeable duty, and soon found himself on the deck of a strongly-armed schooner ; the captain of which, though he did not exactly declare her character, made so forcible an appeal for bread, beef, and even the coarse food of the slaves, that it was apparent he had conferred on himself a mixed commission as slaver or pirate, as opportunity occurred. No demand, however, was made for negroes ; indeed, he appeared to have more on board than he

could have victualled, had he not fallen in with the Teresa.

The elder Menzenza felt obliged to supply the provisions required,—though left with barely sufficient wherewith to perform his own voyage,—he was however somewhat comforted that his ship had not been honoured by a visit from the strangers; and with much speed sent every article of the requisition in his own boats,—fearing, among other roving commissions, the commander of the schooner might have provided himself with a self-constituted right of search. The reason for Menzenza's anxiety was evident, on his receiving permission to part company. No sooner had he seen the pirate hull down in the distance, than he dived below into his cabin, and, drawing from their concealment two large bags of gold, eagerly he grasped the shining metal, while his eyes gloated on the treasure as if his powers of vision were fed and nourished by beholding his beloved hoard. This was not

enough to satisfy him as to the safety of the gold; a tarpauling was ordered to be thrown over the sky-light, the cabin-door was carefully closed, and Menzenza sat himself down to count the coins, as if he feared the peril of his darling bags might have abstracted some of their precious contents.

The Teresa now approached the line; and the winds, which had been gradually dying away, completely failed. Adding to the distress of the vessel, fever broke out among the slaves; and a trifling leak in the bread-room was discovered to have damaged a great portion of their provision, converting most of the “farina” into a coagulated mass unfit for human sustenance. A barque of not more than three hundred and fifty tons, she had originally seven hundred slaves on board; but, after having been three weeks at sea, famine, disease, and pestilence had reduced their number to one half. It was on the day which commenced the fourth week of this protracted voyage,—

the calm still continuing,—that Menzenza called a meeting of the crew in his cabin. Turning to his swarthy ship's company, he thus addressed them :

“ You know, both officers and men, that it is always my way to do the best I can for all. If we could get our cargo to the colonies, your pay would come as sure as you got there : but here are the slaves dying every hour ; and a time seems coming when,—if our mother of Heaven and the saints do not help us,—we must either feed on them or on each other. The wind, one would think, never meant to swell canvass again. All I have to tell you, comrades, is, that you must give up your pay, and I my venture this trip, that we may save our own lives. So the black devils must walk the plank.—What say you, my lads ?”

A consideration for the lives of slaves in the council of slavers could not be expected. One voice alone pleaded the cause of the wretched captives—need we say Carlos was their cham-

pion? Had not Attah's safety been involved in the general destruction of the negroes, he would still have given his veto against this wholesale murder;—but he spoke in vain, and he was coolly reminded of his duty by Menzenza, who, with a smile on his countenance, asked him if he would like a dip and a drying? This is a punishment not uncommon in slavers, where refractory slaves, and even sailors of the crew, divested of the least rag to protect them from the heat of the noon-day sun, are alternately dipped under water and run up to the yard-arm. A lingering death often follows such treatment;—the poor wretch subjected to its influence becomes so excoriated, that it seems an interposition of mercy should the running gear break, and the hapless victim of diabolical cruelty at once find a tomb in the jaws of some expectant shark.

Thus admonished, Carlos could but rush on deck, in the hope of being able to save his beloved Attah. Already had the crew com-

menced hurrying the shackled wretches over the bows of the vessel. Hunted up from below, men, women, and children were indiscriminately hurled over the bulwarks. Carlos descended to the slave-hold; but where was Attah? Had she been already consigned to the deep? He shouted her name, as the naked wretches, awaiting their turn of destruction, crowded round him, begging a protection he had it not in his power to give. In the vain hope of separating her from the others till comparative calm was restored in the vessel, that he might then make one last appeal to his father, he had sought the negro girl.—The cries of Attah! Attah! were lost in the yells of the hapless creatures who poured from the hatchway, and were quickly launched, or chased over the ship's side, amid the savage shouts of the sailors, who were armed with cutlasses, and encouraged by their captain in the work of death.

The search of Carlos for Attah was fruitless;—had it been successful, little good could have been effected: the heart of his father was not made of material to be melted at sufferings, mental or corporeal. It was well indeed that the general confusion prevented more than a passing remark being made on the part he acted during the destruction of the slaves. The jeers of the crew were frequently poured on him when he was perceived to search for the negro girl; but soon everything, save individual misery, was forgotten, when it was understood that the supply of food obtained by appropriating to themselves the slave provisions, could scarcely give them the hope of preserving life many days longer. On the deck of the *Teresa*, yet struggling with their murderers, were two athletic slaves,—the last discovered between the decks, when this alarming fact became known to the captain. The negroes suddenly found themselves unopposed. Their lives for a while

were spared; and when these poor wretches ultimately received the death blow, their bodies were not committed to the deep.

Let us pass over the interval of another week: disease and famine, or, worse than even these,—the meal where the yet quivering flesh of man was food,—had done its work. Menzenza and Carlos, with but three of the crew, survived. It was noon. The glowing sun looked down in fiery glare like the revealed eye of an avenging God. There were putrefying bodies of the dead around them, which the seamen had not strength to cast on the waveless waters. It was a question latterly, whether famine or fever had found the most victims. Another and another of the crew closed their wretched existence. At length the father and the son alone remained in ghastly companionship. They were seated under a torn awning on the deck, which mocked them with the hollow seeming of shade;—but the burning solar rays still reached them through rents in the rotten canvass, for

neither of the mariners had strength to crawl away from their maddening influence. Gold was the actual bed of the helpless slave captain. He had with difficulty brought the two large bags of money from their repository in the cabin. His mind was evidently wandering ; for he had poured their contents on the deck, and, heated as the metal was by being exposed to the sun, he rolled amid his treasure,—even then apparently comforted by its possession.

“ Carlos, come near me !” said the elder Menzenza faintly ;—his livid countenance distorted by an effort to give stronger utterance to his words. Carlos looked towards his wretched parent, but had not power to obey him. “ See you this gold ?” the old man falteringly continued : “ Promise me, as you dread a father’s curse,—it can sink to hell, boy !—promise me, —swear to me, that my gold goes with me. When I die, let it sink my hammock !—Let it all go,—all, I say.—Now count with me.”

He commenced putting piece by piece in a

bag.—“ There, one, two, three !” · His fingers refused to close :—the dying Menzenza had counted till time, to him, had become countless in eternity. Carlos with a tearful eye had watched his father’s death ; and it now seemed as if the work of destruction was complete, for in a few moments after he became insensible.

It is evening,—we are still on the deck of the Teresa,—but there is hope and love amid desolation. The ruby lips of Attah are breathing life into the still unconscious Carlos,—his head supported on her bosom. Concealed beneath an old sail in the slave-hold, she had escaped the observation of the crew when her companions in captivity had been thrown over the ship-side. There was a kind of recess between two bulk-heads, near an opening from a part of the vessel to which Carlos had access ; and here, from time to time, he had deposited biscuits, boiled yams, flasks of wine, and even water,—luxuries which poor Attah could conceal, but dared not use, for fear of exciting the envious

rage of her fellow sufferers, and thus expose their donor to the anger of his father. This little store, well husbanded, at length served her in good stead. The crew having brought all they considered edible under the awning, where they could best obtain air, had latterly never moved from the deck. Thus, when fever and famine made their worst ravages, Attah was so comparatively secure from discovery, that several times,—with her head above the slavehold hatchway,—she had watched the movements of her beloved Carlos.

Ill as he looked, Attah did not dare approach him, or by a word assure him of her existence. Thinking more of his safety than her own, when she heard him calling on her name during the destruction of the slaves, she would not make him privy to her concealment, knowing how much danger might accrue to him in his attempt to protect her ;—and with the same feeling, though she longed to throw herself on his bosom when she beheld him day by day de-

clining in strength, she resolved yet to wait, in the hope that Carlos might survive, till the death or general illness of the crew would allow her to come to him. Animated by this hope, she almost denied herself enough of her provisions to support life, that she might have the more to share with him. But all her sufferings were repaid when, on the morning which had witnessed the decease of Menzenza, the awful stillness of the deck induced her cautiously to leave her concealment.

Attah found Carlos yet alive : she felt his heart throb as the wine, drop by drop administered to him, passed his lips, and oh ! joy unspeakable ! his eyes opened on an existence a second time apparently restored by his devoted Attah. He at first looked vacantly around ; and, after the first burst of her delight, she again for a moment tasted the bitterness of despair. His senses seemed to have forsaken him. Once more he closed his heavy eyelids ;— he had not even recognised her. She poured

the remains of a water-flask on his brow, calling him by endearing names, now of Africa, now of Spain—the home of her beloved white man. Again were the dark eyes of the Spaniard unclosed,—he knew her; danger, suffering, privation, all forgotten, Carlos and Attah were restored to each other. Though both greatly emaciated by famine, they had escaped the attacks of fever, and two biscuits still offered support of life for a few hours. Of water they were quite destitute; but light clouds began to mount the blue vault of the calm sky, and the young sailor knew that a change of weather was at hand.

For twenty days an unruffled sea had spread its melancholy expanse around that lonely vessel, and it seemed as if the voice of deep calling unto deep was to be heard no more; but, as the sun set, the low distant voice of thunder roused the winds from their deadly sleep. A ripple came over the face of the waters—it swelled into the heaving wave; and now the mighty billow ca-

verned the ocean and reared its crest of foam. The tall mast of the Teresa bowed to the power of the tornado. Her sails, which had listlessly hung in mighty folds on the yards, burst from their brails, and flapped above that deck of death and desolation like the wings of a destroying angel.

Attah hid her face in the bosom of her lover, murmuring in wild affright, "Shield me, shield me!" and the arm of Carlos encircled her as though he would have protected her from the elemental war—from the spirit that rode on the storm. The white man was powerless as the negro girl. They had dragged themselves along, till the projecting rail of the poop sheltered them from the rain which at length flooded the decks. The ship was driving before the wind; and, save these hapless beings, the freight was death. The lightning, as it gleamed ever and anon before their eyes, showed them the pale corpses of the crew flung against the bulwarks by the roll of the vessel, or buoyed upon

the rushing waters, when the deck shipped a sea ; their arms tossed on high as if they were coming to clutch the hapless survivors of famine and pestilence, that all might share one common doom.

The tornado had spent its fury, and the sea went down until midnight ; when another tempest burst on the devoted bark, amid which the experienced eye of Carlos beheld the approach of what appeared to him the last messenger of death. A water-spout moved in the ship's course: on, on came the towering column, mounting to the clouds ; while the lightnings played around it, and the billows roared as if hailing in its birth this bantling of the storm. With the energy of despair the young sailor sprang to the helm, but it brooked not the control of his feeble hand. Dashed helplessly to the deck, he commended his soul to Heaven, softly whispering, " Now, Attah, comes 'death !'" He heard the fond girl faintly respond, " With thee !" and silently they awaited the fate which seemed inevitable.

A peal of thunder sounding like the crash of a destroyed world, was followed by a deluge which left the Teresa almost water-logged. The threatening column had burst while a cable's length from the ship. It was the last horror of the night. Daybreak was at hand. Carlos and Attah looked on another sunrise. The barque was in a sinking state, but a small vessel appeared on the starboard bow: a boat was seen approaching to the rescue; and in half an hour the forlorn pair watched the Teresa sinking into the depths of ocean, from the deck of a palm-oil trader which had fallen in with them time enough to prevent their being engulfed with the theatre of their late sufferings.

The master of the Mary had not more human sympathies than generally fall to the lot of captains commanding vessels in a trade which, next to slaving, may claim to be the most disreputable on the high seas; but curiosity to discover if there happened to be a few stores of any kind belonging to the wreck that

might be useful to him, had induced him to send a boat on board. Carlos and Attah were consequently saved, though their first welcome to the Mary was the hoarse voice of her captain exclaiming to his mate, who had boarded the Teresa.

“Curse you, Jack Higgins! what the devil made you hamper the ship with a half-dead lubber and a nigger girl? Why did you not let ’em sink and be d—d?”

Higgins justified himself by saying that the lad had the cut of a sailor about him, and only wanted food to be useful; while the girl would sell for more than her keep and ship-room; and the fellow was softened by this promised reward for his humanity, particularly as he instantly made up his mind to get rid of Attah at Annabona, the island for which he was then running to refit after the tornado.

It seems cruel once more to involve the luckless lovers in distresses, but we are narrating a story that owes but little to the embellishment

of fiction. The sale of Attah was the least horrible portion of the fate that awaited her ; for before Carlos was able to take his part in the duty of the ship, and while he yet required her affectionate care, the poor girl was torn from her charge and dragged towards the captain's cabin. The mate, who was the most active of the party engaged in separating the lovers, Carlos felled with a single blow ; but others of the crew soon mastered the desperate Spaniard : with his feet in irons, and his arms pinioned to his side, he now impotently heard the cries of her who had become dearer and dearer to him since they had been companions in suffering, as she was forced along the deck. Maddened with rage, and too well suspecting the purpose of the captain, Carlos marked the sound of Attah's voice die away as the cabin-door closed on her ; and bitterly did he regret that he had not gone down in the Teresa with the being whose fate he could lament, but not avenge. Meanwhile Attah was thrust into

the presence of Captain Holloway, the wretch who commanded the *Mary*, a bloated burly seaman, aged about fifty years, who called himself an Englishman.

“Come along, what the devil’s your name! You must mess with me, girl, in this voyage: and, as to that young lubber, I’ll teach him to break my mate’s head; d—n him, he shall smart for it!”

Attah shrank from his approach; his intentions were but too evident, though the language he used was almost unintelligible to her. The men who had brought her to the cabin had departed;—the door was unfastened;—with a loud scream the affrighted girl sprang from the grasp of her persecutor, dashed through the opening, and, quickly pursued by Holloway, again found herself on the bosom of Carlos, though his arms could not protect or encircle her. The captain grasped Attah’s neck, while his disengaged hand was doubled in the face of his ironed prisoner, who was alternately be-

seeching mercy for the poor girl, and threatening him with vengeance.

“If you don’t hold your tongue I’ll cut it out of your head, as sure as I’m captain of this ship,” said the brutal man, attempting to strike Carlos. The young Spaniard could not have resented the blow had it fallen on him; but it took effect on the breast of his faithful Attah, who sank at the feet of Holloway.

“D—n you, youngster! if I haven’t a good mind to make you walk the plank for this. Here are two hundred dollars gone if you have made me kill that girl.”

Thus saying, the captain stooped down to see if Attah yet breathed; while Carlos silently prayed that her eyes might never again open on the world. A nearly obliterated cross, with the indistinct trace of two letters marked on her shoulder by gunpowder, and forming a solitary tatoo,—for she was otherwise unscarred by those savage decorations,—caught the atten-

tion of Holloway. He pointed his finger towards the fallen girl, and, slowly asking Carlos where he had found her, so changed was his manner, that it was evident he had made a discovery which deeply affected him. The mark had been impressed on the arm of a child borne to him by a negro woman, who had taken several voyages in his vessel fifteen years ago. Becoming weary of this addition to his ship's company, he had returned the negress to her father, with a "dash," or present, for her services; his daughter, who of course accompanied her mother, being then a twelvemonth old. This child he now discovered in Attah. We need not dwell on the explanation that ensued. Carlos was liberated by Holloway, and their united efforts restored the negro girl to sensibility.

The palm-oil trader was glad to find an experienced sailor in the young Spaniard; and, shuddering at the crime his unbridled passions

had nearly hurried him into committing, he determined on making amends to Attah by giving her to Carlos. The mate, Higgins, who was now the only aggrieved party, had still greater reason to regret this family reconciliation than the mere loss of his revenge on Carlos; for Attah had perceived him appropriate to himself all the gold pieces which could be gathered from the deck of the Teresa. These he was now obliged to refund; and, on the arrival of the Mary at Annabona, he resigned his position in the vessel to the son-in-law of Holloway.

Carlos and Attah were now formally united in the Catholic chapel belonging to the Portuguese on the island; and the young Spaniard, though he continued to make voyages in the Mary till the death of Holloway, established a happy home in the little colony. It was from the lips of a young Spanish settler, who was our guide to the extraordinary lake which spreads its romantic waters in the mountain of

Annabona, we obtained material for our narrative; and his daughter, a playful fawn-like creature, who bounded by his side, was third in descent from the negro girl of the Loango river, and bore the name of Attah.

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RECLUSE OF FERNANDO PO.

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SMILING on the ocean in the splendour of beauty, thy scenic loveliness exhibiting tints which Nature's hand alone can blend,—here earth and air, light and shade, appear in harmonious compact joined, rearing an altar to the sylvan gods! Such art thou, Fernando Po!—Would that we could forget how like the poison-snake gliding amid thy wilds, emulating the emerald beetle in the glistening of its scales, are thy deceitful charms! Venom is in thy breath: alas! thou hast proved but a flower-decked sepulchre to the stranger seeking a home amid thy bowers. Let us awhile picture thee as a first discoverer must have hailed thy land

of fair but faithless promise, rising from the waters of an unknown sea : the impervious bush, the groves of lofty palms, and dense forests where the iron-tree of Africa mocks at the woodman's axe ; thy lofty peaks, towering in rivalry of altitude, on whose topmost height at distant intervals flashes mysterious flame, startling the idle gaze of the wondering natives,—now lost in wreathing vapour, and now breathing out in threatening blaze, as though some demon hand were fanning there a nursing volcano ! But our narrative awaits us.

On the northern coast of the island of Fernando Po there is a little bay, so beautiful that the winds of heaven seem afraid to visit in anger its tranquil waves. On these calm waters, some six score years ago, the *Esperanza* ship of war, —bearing the colours of Spain, and boasting the commission of his most Catholic Majesty, —was riding at anchor in proud security : a term often applied to a bark at her moorings, when strong anchors and cables, together with

a good-look out, give her, or rather her crew, a just right of security. Now on board the Spanish ship a British sailor might have been much puzzled to discover the watch on deck. He could not have supposed two or three lazy fellows asleep beneath the quarter-deck awning, and about twice that number in as deep a repose under the shade of a sail, forward, deserving such a designation. The commander was out of the ship, but no one was on the watch for his return: the vessel might, wind and tide permitting, have dragged her anchors, and gone on shore to acquaint him with the pretty look-out that was kept on board. The fact of the matter was, that Captain Don Diego de Calderona, with several of his officers, had, early on the day the *Esperanza* is introduced to the acquaintance of our reader, made a progress round a distant point of the island, and was just then quite out of sight of the anchorage. They had taken provisions, and a marquee under which to spread their sylvan feast; and,

while half the ship's company were with the captain by way of guard and attendants, it was not to be wondered that the remainder took advantage of his absence to enjoy that most tranquil of luxuries, a siesta, or noon-tide nap.

Had an eye been open of that drowsy crew, there was a scene of beauty spread around that might have challenged attention from the most apathetic of Nature's worshippers. From the promontory, now known by the name of Point William, the island gradually rises to an elevation of eleven thousand feet. Woods, descending to the cliff's edge, overhang the sea with their dark foliage; the curling smoke from the natives' distant fires mounts slowly into blue ether which it seemed sacrilege to pollute; the flight of tropic birds in every variety of plumage; the chattering monkey leaping with joyful antic from tree to tree; and the bright and cloudless sun shining high above all:—well may the savage, gazing at its glorious beams, fancy in that eye of Heaven a Deity

proudly regarding the creatures of his bounty, rejoicing in the beauty and the wonder his power has called forth !

There was at length a watch on board the *Esperanza*. We mean not the negro cook, who was now busy about his coppers, preparing the dinner of the ship's company ; he was below ; but there was actually a look-out on deck. Leo, a noble water-dog, was performing that duty for the still sleeping sailors, who fairly promised not to wake until called to their next meal. The sagacious animal was mounted on the bows, anxiously regarding the movements of some twenty canoes, just put off from the shore, crowded with natives. Leo was the peculiar pet of Don Diego's nephew Juan, who was now enjoying himself on shore ; having left his favourite on board to save him, as his little master said, from snakes and scorpions, the dog having been severely stung a few days before by one of the latter reptiles. Now when Leo first saw the boats approaching the ship, he be-

thought him, no doubt, it was the pic-nic party returning, for he wagged his tail and whined with joy and expectation ; but a second glance aroused his instinctive suspicions. The dusky islanders were fast nearing the vessel when the dog's long howl and quick bark aroused the sleeping watch ; and well it was they were awakened, or their sleep might soon have proved eternal.

The natives of Fernando Po have always been described as cruel and crafty in the extreme. It appears that the division of the crew belonging to the *Esperanza* was not unknown to the savages ; a war palaver had been summoned on the instant, and a simultaneous attack on the white men, both on ship and shore, was the consequence. While a party of natives even then lay in rear of the unconscious revellers,—who were far away and out of sight of their comrades,—twenty crowded canoes made towards the man of war. How fared it with the captain and his com-

panions we will relate anon ; but thus was the ship saved. The quarter-deck guns had been fortunately loaded in case of a night attack from the Bobies,—such is the name of the Fernando Po Africans,—and to this precaution was owing the safety of the *Esperanza*.

The enemy had come silently on, so long as they thought their approach unperceived ; but when the bustle on deck told them they were discovered, with a yell that awoke the echoes of the shore, the canoes were dashed rather than paddled towards the ship's side. She was riding with her bows towards the shore, and the savages approached larboard and starboard as well as forward ; thus she was likely to be speedily surrounded. Two of the leading boats had reached the main chains ; and their crews, looking like demons from the smithy of an Etna, boarded. At the same moment the guns were opened on the other assailants ; and the miscellaneous projectiles poured forth, together with the terror inspired by

the roar of artillery, utterly discomfited the expedition. Canoes were cut in halves or sunk by the round shot; while grape and canister, or that which did duty as such in the form of broken bottles and rusty nails, tinged the waters with the blood of the Bobies.

In the mean time those who had succeeded in boarding, rushed aft,—for the moment bearing down all opposition;—and several of the *Esperanza's* crew fell by the clubs and spears with which the savages were armed. This triumph, however, was short, when the sailors who had manned the guns,—after having beaten off the canoes,—turned to the assistance of their comrades. It was not to be expected that the Spaniards would give quarter; and, ten minutes after the first warning bark of the faithful *Leo*, the ship was freed from enemies. Not so Don Diego and his officers, who were then tranquilly enjoying themselves under the shade of a marquee, unconsciously surrounded by treacherous foes. Dense woods hedged them in on

every side, except towards the sea; and even in that direction the little creek where their boats were lying, partially overhung with foliage, afforded concealment to the subtle savages who there kept watch, hoping to cut off the retreat of the doomed "white men."

The Esperanza had been once before at Fernando Po, for the purpose of obtaining fuel and water. The glade where Diego now held sylvan revel owed its clearing to the working parties from his ship; for, attracted by the beauty of the little inlet whose silvery waters pierced the wooded shade, he had at its termination, by the application of brand and axe, kept down vegetation sufficiently to form the area which they at present occupied. The remains of their noon-day meal lay scattered on the long grass which matted over the roots of felled trees. Their viands had been amply discussed; and the officers seemed emulating each other in noisy play with a fine manly boy, the captain's nephew, already introduced as the master of

Leo. Don Diego sat a little apart, evidently encouraging a sport he committed not his dignity by sharing; but every now and then a shower of ground-nuts, the missiles of the roisterers, though coming only from the daring hand of young Juan, would prove sufficiently effective to derange the curl of the Don's moustache, and cover his head with dust.

The scene on the outside of the marquee was not so turbulent. Some officials were distributing the simple provisions that were provided for the sailors, who, each as he received his portion, returned to the shade of the tree he had quitted, and in knots of three or four met in the natural bowers of the surrounding foliage; while the lazy sentry over the arms piled before the tent,—gazing with a heavy but longing eye on the enjoyment of his comrades,—ordered his musquet, and leant listlessly on the barrel.

Let us take advantage of this momentary calm, preceding the horrors of savage warfare, to introduce Don Diego and his nephew more

particularly to the notice of the reader. The De Calderonas had for many generations prided themselves, not only as to antiquity of ancestry, but on the more plebeian advantages of riches and vast estates. Unfortunately, however, while the former increased, the latter decreased; till, a few years before our tale commences, so urgent had become the necessities of their noble house, it had been actually resolved that a scion of the genealogical tree should be sacrificed on the vulgar altar of commerce. Diego was the only son, though not the only offspring of his father. Old Don Guzman's affections, so far as they were not buried with the illustrious dead, were shared in the present generation between a youth and maiden. Alas! times were getting worse and worse: the old man tried in vain to get his son an honourable post at court; could it even have been subordinate to the clerk of the kitchen, ay, even of the scullery, it would have been better thus to have served a king, than not to be a courtier

at all. The connections of the family had died away ; and at length Don Guzman was fain to accept the offer of an eminent cloth merchant to provide for his son, rather than keep him at home, lessening a pittance scarcely able to supply the wants of his father and sister.

Then came a blot in the escutcheon of the De Calderonas,—thus the angel proper of heraldry was worsted by the demon of trade ;—and little wonder, seeing there was no contradicting the unpleasant fact that the quarterings of the family arms had long ceased to benefit the quartering of the family ; and the shield, hanging in the hall of an obscure quinta near Madrid, was no shield against the rain that found its way through a roof that barely sheltered the last of the family ! Yes, commerce won the day : and Diego, though he was almost as proud as his father, had the good sense to attend diligently to his calling ; ay, and civilly to the calling of the humblest customer entering the

warehouse or shop belonging to Carlos Menadez, near the "Sun-gate," in the good city of Madrid.

A great change had come over the fortunes of a noble house, but Diego was provided for: he would in the course of time forget the poor Hidalgo in the rich tradesman; and Don Guzman might still be allowed to dream over the titles and broad lands lost by his great-great-grand sire's unnatural rebellion against the king of Spain for the time being, and the prosperity of the family of De Calderonas for ever. The old man would soon be "in dust without distinction laid;" but Donna Christina was yet unmarried,—unsought by the scions of Spanish nobility. Not even an Hidalgo having a right to traditional, if not actual estates,—and an antiquary like Don Guzman would of course consider such a claim valid,—came a-wooing. Alas! when her father should die, it seemed likely she would endow a convent with her beauty, as her only resource against the desecration of a

mésalliance: but this hapless fate was averted soon after the establishment of her brother at Madrid, and thus the deliverance was accomplished.

The Condé de Toralva, a man of ancient family and large rent roll, was well known in most of the capitals of Europe, about the beginning of the last century, as an indefatigable traveller. The pursuits of science caused not the noble Spaniard's constant migration; little was he known among the literati of his age, though possessed of respectable attainments;—he journeyed not as a patriot inquiring into the manners, customs, and institutions of other lands, to ameliorate the moral condition of his own;—nor with the general philanthropy of a cosmopolite, to honour virtue and stimulate merit in whatever clime they might be found. No! the Condé de Toralva's philanthropical researches never caused his dismissal from the most enslaved of states: his was the philosophy of an epicurean—he employed the moments of

existence, since they *would* fly, in bearing him from one scene of enjoyment to another, till the world should cease to afford variety, or the palled appetite refuse the banquet of sense.

By the will of his father, who died when his son was an infant, the Condé had been permitted early emancipation from the restraint of guardians, and was thus enabled to exhaust the delights of Madrid and Seville as a mere youth. He then took the tour of European courts. If war shut one against the Spaniard, others were open: indeed, more than once, being an excellent linguist, he had played the traitor by actual residence under a feigned name amongst the *élite* of a nation at enmity with his country; but then, as he argued the point with himself, he religiously hated the men; while, as to the women, Spain warred not with them, and, in collecting the suffrages of their hearts, he spoiled the enemy where armies could not approach.

Such had been the career of our travelled Condé, when, a satiated sensualist of five-and-thirty, he returned to Madrid ready to exclaim with the Roman emperor, "Who will show me a new pleasure?" He found it in virtuous love. Accident brought him acquainted with Donna Christina, who, though lately deprived of a mother's guardianship by death, had not lost maternal counsel and guidance before the gifts which Nature had liberally bestowed on her were judiciously perfected by culture. Well educated in the present acceptation of the term she certainly might not be; but she was much better informed than many a Donna whose sire yet boasted the possession of larger domains than Don Guzman assured her his grandfather had lost. She was a good musician, sang pleasingly, danced gracefully; in short, Christina was a lovely, fascinating Spanish girl of sixteen, and, moreover, truly amiable and affectionate in disposition.

Since the death of her mother she had de-

voted herself to the comforts of her father with the utmost assiduity. Irritated by not being able to brave it with the best in society, Don Guzman had long retired into domestic privacy; and, when stern necessity reluctantly obliged him to place his son with a tradesman, he became a complete recluse, scarcely moving out of his house, so deeply did this sacrifice of pride affect him. Christina thus lived three miles from Madrid as completely secluded as if that busy hive of men was not in existence: her father her sole companion; an old man and woman, almost past work, their attendants; and an occasional visit from Diego her greatest recreation.

The Condé de Toralva, attended by his grooms, one evening rode by the Quinta de Calderona, which was situated out of the direct road to the capital. He was engaged in his usual occupation—killing time; judging by his speed, he seemed likely to kill his horses to boot. A tall, handsome cavalier, well mounted,

and followed by retainers in splendid liveries, might not often be seen in that locality : was it to be wondered then that Christina, happening to get a glimpse of the cavalcade through the jalousies of her apartment, opened the window to gaze for a moment on their rapid career ? Had she not taken this second view, it is more than probable we should have no story to tell.

Just then old Pedro, the Hidalgo's only manservant, was returning from Madrid seated on a large donkey, the panniers of which were laden with a week's marketing for the family. An angle of the road brought the old man in sight, when at the same instant his young mistress beheld the horse of the stranger bear provender, ass, and rider to the earth,—all rolled in the dust together. Christina waited not to see more ; but hastily calling her father, and Nannette, Pedro's ancient helpmate, to her aid, she sallied forth to assist the fallen domestic, whom she feared was severely injured. Her anxiety on this head was soon relieved ; she found man

and beast unharmed, while the stranger's grooms were replacing in the panniers all that was not past service of the provisions so unceremoniously distributed about the road. Their master, the while, was seated on his horse, now making his excuses to Pedro, and now directing his servants in their task, pointing out another and another of the stray articles, when, the maiden appearing, the Condé, on discovering her to be the fair proprietrix of the injured property, felt that to her his apologies for the accident became especially due; nor were they less diffuse from his having found a more interesting auditor than the angry Pedro, who was muttering his displeasure at people charging along the road as if they were running at a bull.

Christina, satisfied that their faithful servant was unhurt, would now have gladly shrunk from the notice of the stranger; she was thus on the point of retiring from the scene when Don Guzman joined her; and,

Toralva addressing to her father a repetition of his regrets, the Donna recovered from the embarrassment his looks of admiration had excited. About half an hour after, the handsome cavalier was seated beneath an alcove in the little garden of the Quinta, drinking wine with the old Don of such execrable quality, that we must attribute his imbibing it to motives somewhat stronger than a desire of doing penance for having overthrown the skin which had borne the nauseous beverage among the articles of Pedro's marketing. This wine, however, was the best that Don Guzman had to place before his guest, for the old man could afford himself no better even on saints' days and other festivals.

The wonder of the matter was, how the Hidalgo had permitted any one to spy out the "nakedness of the land;" a stranger had not been within his gates for many a long month. Was it that the Condé had looked unutterable

things at the lovely Christina? Be that as it may, beneath the shade of a luxuriant vine which twined around the broken trellis of what had once been a side entrance to the Quinta, sat the social companions. The garden before them was small, but prettily laid out in fancifully formed flower-beds. It was Christina's pride and delight: she had rescued it from the hungry sway of Pedro, — he having appropriated every other portion of the grounds to the production of edible plants. "There is no use," the grumbling old fellow would remark to Nannette, "in the Donna's trying to have anything gay about the Quinta, it only makes the old walls look more dingy; and there is hardly ground enough for the pumpkins, melons, tomatoes, and such like useful matters; there is little money to be had from the Hidalgo for market, and things are getting worse and worse: — not that I mind the bit of garden much, it is the best she could have taken; for, when the

south wall of the old wing falls down, the rubbish will choke it."

Such was Pedro's comfortable reflection with respect to Christina's flower-garden, and what he prognosticated seemed indeed very likely to occur, though Don Guzman would not believe it possible; and forgetting that the wings of Time must sweep in their flight, as with the besom of destruction, the wings of the proudest mansion, it was even under a wall tottering to its base, he addressed himself to the entertainment of his newly made acquaintance. The Hidalgo talked of his long line of ancestry with as much familiarity as if he had enjoyed the honour of personal intimacy with each of his progenitors. There was Don Antonio de Calderona, who, in the celebrated tournament at Granada, overthrew the two Moorish kings; this was his great-great-grandfather,—a warrior of renown, but pious withal: — a good Christian. Don Guzman declared it was a pleasant sight to see the noble Antonio walking in pro-

cession with his esquires, pages, and men-at-arms, to perform a vow of half his spoils to the chapel of Our Lady of Grace, after the surprise of five Moorish towns, and the slaughter of the infidels, old men and maidens, mothers and babes,—all for the glory of the Cross, and satisfaction of the blessed saints. Then there was the holy and learned Abbot of San Bernard,—he came of a female branch, being Don Guzman's great maternal uncle ; who, on occasion of a proclaimed disputation, to be holden in the great hall of the cathedral at Seville, on the impossibility of salvation out of the pale of the Romish church, actually so daunted all disputants by his opening address in behalf of the only true religion, that no one dared to oppose him : even the dignitaries of the Inquisition, who were in waiting, became so astonished by his eloquence, that they almost forgot their disappointment at not having any foolhardy heretical antagonist of the churchman to figure at their Auto da fé. “A tall majestic man was the

Abbot," remarked Don Guzman, "but fat withal, and having a placid benignity of countenance that delighted the beholder. When excited by holy fervour, he was so powerful in controversy, that the devil once paying him a visit in his cell, wearing the form of a beautiful novice, the evil one was nearly persuaded to take the veil in a neighbouring convent; and it was fortunate this strange penitent's character was discovered in time to prevent the profanation."

Much more did Don Guzman narrate to the Condé, who bore himself with considerable patience for so gallant a cavalier; his eye only occasionally wandering from the shrivelled form and leathern visage of his host, —who looked very like a resuscitated mummy gibbering about the companions of his youth,—in search of the graceful Christina, then busying herself in her favourite parterre. Attention thus directed — though it was inattention to himself —did not in this case offend the old

Don; who interrupted a long account, relating to the saintly virtues of his daughter's great-grandmother, with a remark that the maiden would prove much such another matchless character, when some fifty years had brought to the fulness of perfection her present amiable disposition. Of Diego in the shop at Madrid the old man spoke not a word, nor, except his daughter, of any relation or connection in the present generation; and when the followers of his guest, who had been dismissed during their master's stay, returned to accompany him home, and the Condé, promising a visit on the morrow, made a thousand adieus to Christina and departed, the scheming father announced it as his intention to conceal the existence of his son from their new acquaintance. In vain the affectionate sister wept, and besought him to remember that her brother, having sacrificed his own wishes to relieve the embarrassments of his family, ought not to be thus forsaken.

Don Guzman swore that the honour of his house was the first thing to be considered. Diego had become a tradesman, and it could not be helped ; but a daughter of that house was yet to be disposed of, to which every other consideration must now give place : so confident was Don Guzman of the impression made on the Condé by the beauty of Christina, that he even went so far as to school Pedro and Nannette in the contemplated deceit.

It was now only necessary that a letter should be despatched to the young merchant, ordering him, on pain of parental displeasure, not to approach the Quinta till he received permission. This was accordingly done ; and Christina, though tenderly attached to her brother, was too much under the control of her father to oppose his will : thus she was obliged to yield a reluctant consent to this virtual abandonment of Diego ; and when the next day, and indeed every day for the next month, brought the Condé de Toralva to the Quinta, she dared not tell

him that secret, which, during the happy hours she now passed, listening to the breathings of his fervent, disinterested love, was truly her only sorrow. The travelled *roué* had become desperately enamoured,—we say desperately, for he contemplated marriage; and this was a stern resolve for the Condé, who had always considered the entrance to the holy state of matrimony as figurative of suicide,—a leap in the dark, — a knot once tied never to be untied,—a bourn from whence no traveller returns, &c. &c. &c. He had been very facetious in his time on a subject regarding which your determined bachelors are possessed of excellent stock jests; but, as Nannette told Pedro, the Condé had found his Eve.

We see you wonder, gentle reader, and will explain the old lady's philosophy. She imagined that, since the beginning of the world, the generations of mankind have been formed of certain males and females created with peculiar affinities for each other. Every Adam

had his Eve, sent on this earth especially for him, if he could but find her ; and though one might be born in sunny Italy, the other in Calmuc Tartary,—the distance between them, a mighty anti-nuptial influence, most likely preventing the requisite introduction,—still they were as much a pair as the animals in Noah's ark ; and, not meeting, would wed no other. Again, however dissimilar the individuals might be to the finite eye of man, however unlikely to coalesce, no sooner did these affined parties approach within the sphere of each other's attractions, than such a proximity would necessarily involve their union ; or, as Nanette said, “ when the right Adam and Eve meet, they cannot help marrying.” How second, third, and left-handed unions, or family arrangements on the seraglio principle, were provided for by the old woman's philosophy, we never learned ; but in most systems there is something we must take for granted, that, though incomprehensible, it may still be right.

To resume our story : the Condé's intentions were not strictly honourable when he first made the agreeable to the old Hidalgo in the hope of freedom of access to the society of his daughter ; but, if there be a divinity that "doth hedge a king," there is a more holy atmosphere around maiden purity in all the pride and beauty of womanhood. Even an accomplished intrigant like Toralva felt this influence ; and thus ere long the nuptial day was fixed, Christina scarcely requiring Don Guzman to lay his commands on her after the approved fashion of Spanish fathers.

Let us now turn our attention to young Diego, whose feelings had been so cruelly outraged by the cold-blooded policy of the Hidalgo. The first intimation which he had received of his father's will was so little explanatory, that not till he had privately communicated with Pedro, and through him with his sister, was he fully aware of the exact circumstances under which he was forbidden the paternal

roof. He would not have been a true Calderona if his pride had not taken fire at the indignity offered him. Yielding to the necessities of his family, sorely against his own inclination he embarked in trade, and now he resolved to emancipate himself from its trammels. Diego suddenly disappeared from Madrid ; nor could the inquiries of Don Guzman, who relented so far as to make covert exertions to discover the place of his retreat, gain any satisfactory intelligence on this subject. The brother had not even declared his future plans to his sister, much as he loved her, fearing to undergo solicitation on a subject with respect to which he was determined ; not only from his dislike to commerce, but from a dread of interfering with the interests and happiness of Christina. Had he remained in Madrid, Toralva must have discovered him ; for the shop of his late master happened to be near the mansion over which his sister was soon to reign, adding grace and beauty to the splendour that would surround her.

We will pass over the nuptials of the Condé and the beautiful Christina, seeing that there was little of pageantry in the affair, and marriage ceremonies are dull and dispiriting at the best. They have need to be followed by a honeymoon to make even the "happy couple" forget the solemnity and agitation of the wedding. It is indeed a serious drama for which there are no stage directions, and the by-play is most complex. The performers, each trying to look sympathy with all, scarcely know whether to dress their faces in smiles or tears; for joy and sorrow, anticipations and regrets, seem completely interwoven, forming the woof and warp of that day of destiny; when even parental benedictions and gratulations appear to mingle melancholy forebodings with the outpourings of affection.

It is said that a reformed rake makes a good husband; we have not time to dispute this question: certain it is, he is likely to prove a jealous one, provided he really loves his wife;

and thus was poor Christina's happiness so transient, that, when she had been married six months, her existence had scarcely numbered as many "white" days. The Condé insisted on his bride being constantly in society, that he might enjoy the triumph the universal admiration of her beauty excited ; but woe to the hapless possessor of that beauty ! Did she look, did she speak, did she even sigh,—and cause enough she had for sighing,—her husband found excuse for jealousy ; and yet, by a strange perversity of temper, he gathered round him all his former gay associates, pretending to laugh with them at jealous Benedicts, who, he would assert, paid but a poor compliment to themselves, as well as to their wives.

Old Guzman wondered that his daughter was not happy, for in moments of domestic retirement this was too evident. The Condé was surprised that his inordinate affection did not content her, and considered that the stormy manifestations of his suspicions should be received

as proofs of his unaltered love : the poor girl wished herself back in the old Quinta with her father, as in days of yore ; for then no one was angry with her, and, accustomed to Don Guzman's peculiarities, she was really happy. It was vain, however, to regret the past ; but, gladly availing herself of the plea of ill health, she persuaded her husband to pass a short time at a castle on one of his coastward estates. Being entirely shut out from society, the Condé and his bride were now, for the first time since their marriage, tranquilly happy. Don Guzman, who had accompanied them, was proportionately charmed, and took an early opportunity of reminding Christina that she was indebted to *his* management for her present bliss. Adding to the delight of the family party, the Condessa proved to be *enceinte* : indeed, all went "merry as a marriage bell," when one day the Condé received an extraordinary letter from Madrid, the vile author of which time could never discover ; but perhaps we too harshly

designate the writer of an epistle which might have owed its origin to the heedless levity of some former *roué* associate of Toralva, who little thought that he was exemplifying the fable of "the boys and the frogs."

The Condé, returning from a solitary evening ride, had been overtaken by his courier, who, among other letters sent him from Madrid, produced one, the direction of which was in so curiously disguised a hand, that he immediately opened it. The contents ran thus: "The Condé de Toralva is too easy and confiding a husband; his wife's only reason for wishing to retire into privacy, was to enjoy the society of a lover without being exposed to the prying curiosity of Madrid. He is known to be in the immediate neighbourhood of the castle." The courier proceeded, after delivering his despatches; and the Condé allowed his horse's rein to rest on the neck of the well-trained animal, while his eyes gloated on the

extraordinary document before him. The fire of jealousy seemed lighting up in his heart with energies that appeared to have grown stronger from repose. At length, dashing his sharp stirrups into the sides of the horse,—the same that had borne him to his first interview with Christina,—he galloped homeward. His other letters were scattered on the road, as with eager hand he thrust the fatal epistle that had maddened him, into his bosom. When near the grounds that surrounded the castle, he so far mastered the violence of his rage as to check his speed, and take bitter counsel with himself in his present painful dilemma. As to doubting his dishonour, it never entered into his thoughts. Had he not on more than one occasion acted a part in an intrigue under exactly similar circumstances? Even now she might be with her paramour: the Condessa expected not his speedy return. Dismounting, the Condé

cautiously approached the orange grove, where a sight awaited him which unhappily confirmed his suspicions.

Diego de Calderona—who, it seems, since the period of his disappearance, was serving as a sailor on board a Spanish ship of war,—weary of a subordinate situation, had obtained leave of absence to seek out his father, in the hope that, without being acknowledged by his family, he might through their interest be promoted to the rank of an officer. Attempting to obtain an interview with Don Guzman, he accidentally met Christina. But a few moments had they indulged in the endearment of their undiminished affection. Diego feared, even more than his sister, to be seen by the Condé, since it might endanger her happiness to be discovered in a deceit. Could he be provided for as a comparative stranger to the family by the interest of his titled brother-in-law, the youth promised himself to be content. Unconscious

that human eye was upon them, he embraced the Condessa, bidding her request his father to grant him an early interview.

Diego had scarcely quitted the glade of the shrubbery which had witnessed this meeting between the brother and sister, when, darting from behind an adjacent cork-tree, the Condé sprang towards his affrighted wife. A drawn sword was in his hand;—his attention seemed divided between pursuit of Diego and immediate vengeance on Christina.

“Spare him ! spare him !” cried the agonized woman, as she knelt before her husband.
“He is my brother !”

“Die, adulteress, with that lie on thy tongue !” and the Condé plunged his weapon into the bosom of his innocent victim,—for he believed her not. The blood gushed forth on the green sod, but Toralva waited not to see the dying agonies of the being he even then madly loved. He was in pursuit of Diego, who, unconscious of the tragedy that

was enacting, had mounted his horse, which he had left but at a little distance from the orange grove, and consequently was beyond the power of the infuriated man.

Finding that he was foiled in further vengeance, the Condé passed by a side door into the villa, secured a large sum in specie about his person, and again throwing himself on his saddle, was speedily on his way to the coast. That evening he had watched a ship preparing for sea; little did he care to what part of the world she might convey him : but, reaching the small seaport off which she lay just as her master was going on board, he found her to be a slaver outward bound. The sight of gold is a universal passport, and the Condé at midnight was pacing the deck of the *Maria* on his way to the western coast of Africa. Till then he might have been said to have acted without the guidance of reason, except so far as self-preservation induced him to leave the scene of a murder for which the immunities of his

rank would scarcely prevent his paying a heavy penalty.

The Condé's future plans were now determined by the destination of the ship in which he had embarked. He resolved to become a recluse on some savage shore, where even the face of man, should it intrude on his solitude, would wear a different hue from the beings he imagined had so deeply injured him. He would have landed, in pursuance of this resolution, on the first African shores they touched at; but, being attacked by a violent fever, it was not till the *Maria* went for yams and water to the island of Fernando Po that he felt strong enough to effect his purpose. The master of the vessel readily aided him in conciliating a powerful tribe of the Bobies; and the Condé, in consideration of making over the gold in his possession, was landed with two muskets and a barrel of gunpowder. After aiding his protectors, when making

war against a weaker tribe of natives, whom they succeeded in destroying, he was allowed to fulfil his original intention of secluding himself even from the face of the savage. Eight years had he passed in a hut which commanded an extensive view of sea and shore; it was indeed a sort of watch-tower, from whence he could mark the arrival of ships, and frequently detect the movements of his friends the Bobies.

The Condé had with some alarm perceived the *Esperanza* anchor in the neighbouring bay, when she visited the island a few months previous to the period of which we write. Had his place of refuge been discovered by the authorities of Spain? Yet, more extraordinary, had a prince ascended the Spanish throne so emulous of awarding impartial justice, that a ship had been despatched to bring him to a retributive tribunal? But the purposes for which the *Esperanza* sought Fernando Po had soon become apparent. Wooding and watering

parties were sent regularly out, and boat-loads of yams and other vegetables went off daily. Her second visit seemed equally pacific; for nearly a week elapsed, and the Condé's seclusion was not intruded on. It had remained undiscovered by the Spaniards; and the savage natives, having determined on the destruction of the new comers, desired not to introduce them to the Recluse, fearing to put their enemy in communication with one who might act as a spy on their proceedings. Being satisfied that the visit of the *Esperanza* had no connection with his residence on the island, Toralva continued his usual dreamy meditative life, and little heeded the storm that threatened to overwhelm the crew of the man-of-war.

The Condé was not so completely a misanthrope as to rejoice in the destruction of his countrymen; and his better feelings would have induced him to save them, had the intended onslaught come to his knowledge. His power among the savages was

great. They considered him a fetish-man, who communed with the great spirit that lived in their mysterious mountain ; for, whenever the flame was visible on the peak, the strange white man might always be seen watching it from his hut ; and the remembrance of his weapons, breathing fire and smoke during their wars, still excited respect and admiration. The sound of guns had called the Recluse from his hut :—he perceived that the attack on the vessel was repulsed, and here his interposition was not required ; but he had that morning seen the boats of the Spaniards in their way along the coast, and, aware of the treacherous cunning of the natives, with a single mental glance the plans of these savages were revealed.

“ And why should I disturb myself ? ” argued the Condé ; “ why risk my credit with my neighbours to save men who are here as invaders ? ’Tis true they are my countrymen, but are they not also the countrymen of

the wife that betrayed me? They are white men—my curse be on them!—It might have been the beauty of complexion, or form, that lured Christina from her fidelity!—Even the wretch that polluted her may be among them.”

Thus communing with himself, he still was wending his way in the direction of the point of land which he had seen the boats round a few hours before. “They would be justly served were they altogether annihilated,” muttered the Recluse: “what have I to do with white men?” and here he gazed on the reflection of his figure as he hung over a natural basin formed in the cliff he was crossing: the land drains had filled it with water, which had settled into a pellucid mirror stretched over the dark rock. He was indeed a savage in form, though long years of intercourse with civilized society forbade that complete naturalization of mind with the scene around, which the misanthrope had made it his study to acquire. He wore

the rude straw hat of a native, decorated with the black feathers of the man-of-war bird ; his legs and arms were bare ; while round his tall gaunt frame was carelessly fastened a kind of toga of dark skins, apparently spoils of the monkey tribe. He had several times suffered from fever, but his iron constitution threw off the debilitating effects of this scourge of Europeans ; his step was strong, and he wielded a rough stake with which he bent aside the bushes that impeded his way. Such was the being whom that mysterious love of kind, which binds man to man, led almost instinctively, despite long-cherished hatred and stern resolves, amid the scene that now opens to our view.

The reader, so patiently accompanying us through this rambling narrative, may recollect the perfect repose of the unconscious "white men," encompassed by their barbarous foes. We have described the site of their enjoyment as surrounded by verdure, except where the little inlet gave harbour to the boats of the

party : the sound of the Esperanza guns startled the Spaniards, producing that moment of inaction after surprise which so few can overcome by what is designated presence of mind. And now the leafy walls around them seemed to open at a thousand portals, as with a yell—fit herald of coming horrors!—the Bobies burst on the arena. Their war-whoop seemed the cry of wild beasts of the forests, rather than intonations of the human voice; and the savages more resembled monsters of the woods, or demons loosed from the bondage of hell, than aught of the race of man. Their straw caps were decorated with feathers of divers hues, mingled with the skulls and other bones of the monkey and the sea-bird; beneath which the restless glaring eye of the African looked out like a ball of fire. The whole frame was plastered with red earth, giving a kind of bronze to an otherwise ebon skin; and for a second each shook his club or other rude weapon in the air, as though expecting to conquer

by the terrors of their shouts and wild array. A general discharge of spears followed this extraordinary manifestation, and then a desperate charge on the white men brought the belligerent parties to close quarters.

The Spaniards till then had scarcely struck a blow, so completely were they surprised: but Don Diego now formed his sailors in front of his tent; arms were distributed, and a fire opened, which for a moment beat off the Boobies. Again they rallied, and, supported by reinforcements from the wood, came on. Presenting a front of bristling bayonets, Don Diego moved in a sort of square towards his boats. Smart was the action maintained by a few brave Spaniards against a crowd of savages; but the gun was still so terrific an engine, that, though the natives regarded it not with their once superstitious awe, this powerful arm made up in some degree for the disparity of numbers between the Europeans and Africans. Diego neared the creek just in time to se-

cure possession of the boats. He had now lost one fourth of his number; and, while bravely showing a front to the enemy with a few of his men, he ordered the embarkation to commence from the rear of his party. In this way, by keeping up a determined fire, all the boats were enabled to push off, except a cutter, which remained for those covering the retreat.

The captain, slightly wounded, was the last to embark. He had leaped from the shore amid a shower of spears, when he beheld a savage bearing away little Juan on his shoulders. The boy had been sent under care of an officer in the first boat: this unfortunately grounding while threading the creek, the child had fallen into the hands of the natives. On the impulse of the moment Diego sprang again to the shore, and fell amid a crowd of his foes. So rapidly had the native passed with his prize that the sailors in the cutter had not observed Juan: conceiving their commander had fallen forward on

receiving his death-wound,—yielding to the belief that he was slain, and their situation becoming every instant more critical,—they made the best of their way out of the creek. Joining the other boats in the bay, the little squadron proceeded to the ship to concert measures of retribution.

With a yell of triumph had the Bobies closed around the defenceless Diego. So many weapons were pointed at him,—so many savage eyes were glaring on him, that death seemed certain, when the crowd opened suddenly from without, and Juan was again given to his anxious sight,—no longer in the grasp of the spoiler with whom he had first beheld him, but apparently in no less savage hands. It was the Recluse of Fernando Po who now held the affrighted boy, and dragged or rather bore him toward his uncle. We have already described the Condé's extraordinary appearance. To this must now be added features

agonized in their expression of amazement, doubt, and inquiry.

“This child !” he exclaimed, as at his mandate the natives raised their prostrate prisoner, —“this child !—Does his mother live?”

The Recluse could say no more ; but in that exclamation he revealed the father’s yearning for his son,—the husband’s memory of his injured wife. Juan was the offspring of Toralva and Christina, nor did boy ever possess features that more fully told the race from whence he had sprung. When, hastened onwards by the report of musquetry, the Condé saw him in the arms of the native, an extraordinary likeness to the characteristic lineaments of his family struck him immediately : he snatched the child to his arms.

“Take me to my uncle—I am Juan de Toralva,” screamed the little captive. Perplexed, —the thoughts of other days pressing on his brain,—he dashed forward ; nor waited to hear

a demand on the part of the savage he had robbed of his prize, for the skull of the white boy when the fetish had slain him. Juan continued to cry; and as he saw Don Diego fall from the boat, forgetful of his own position in the arms of the terrific stranger, he sobbed out, "My poor mother!—They are killing her dear brother!"

"This boy will drive me mad!—Had Christina a brother?" The question had hardly risen to the thoughts of Toralva, when, the crowd of savages opening at his voice, he beheld the uncle of Juan, as we have before related. After the first exclamation of the Condé, Diego needed not to be informed that the husband of his sister stood before him. Explanations at such a moment could not be attempted: assuring Toralva that Christina yet lived, and that his son was in his arms, he represented to him the necessity of rousing himself for the protection of his newly found relatives. The Recluse ransomed the pri-

soners by a promise that sundry guns and a barrel of powder should be immediately landed from the ship, and was allowed to conduct them to his hut. Here Diego related to the Condé that it was the meeting of a brother and a sister he had witnessed in the orange grove ; and explained that the sword which he imagined had slain the Condessa, inflicted but a superficial wound. She had recovered, given birth to Juan, and still loved the memory of her long lost husband.

On the following day the Esperanza was sailing out of the harbour, now known by the name of Clarence Cove, with a favourable breeze. The dead had been buried, and the living ransomed. Once more in European garb, the Recluse of Fernando Po bade adieu to the isle in which he had so long made his home. His boy was by his side, and the brother of his beloved Christina had extended to him the hand of forgiveness. A speedy voyage to Spain completed the reunion of

the family; and the Condessa received her lord with an affection which time and injuries had not power to subdue. Don Guzman frequently took occasion to remark, that it was rather an extraordinary coincidence that his great-grandmother had been nearly killed by his great-grandsire in a fit of jealousy;—but, with the exception of the old Hidalgo's reminiscences, the past was only remembered as a lesson for the future.

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"But I am a poor forgotten girl, and you are the nephew and heir of a rich planter: he will never consent to our union."

"He will consent to it, I swear to you, for you are amiable as you are beautiful; and, in ensuring my happiness, he will also be making amends to one on whom Fortune, from her very blindness, has not been lavish of her gifts. These acts of kindness he ever takes pleasure in: were did I say?—oh, that he would take pleasure in anything!"

Henrique dropped the hand of Julie, and, while tears gathered in his full hazel eye, he

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“ BUT I am a poor forlorn girl, and you are the nephew and heir of a rich planter : he will never consent to our union.”

“ He *will* consent to it, dearest Julie, for you are amiable as you are beautiful ; and, in ensuring my happiness, he will also be making amends to one on whom Fortune, from her very blindness, has not been lavish of her gifts. In acts of kindness he ever takes pleasure. Pleasure did I say ?—oh, that he would take pleasure in anything !”

Henrique dropped the hand of Julie, and, while tears gathered in his full hazel eye, he

continued to gaze in the face of the gentle girl, who, alarmed at this sudden change in her lover's manner,—for he had till then been speaking of the bliss which would crown their mutual affection,—earnestly exclaimed, “What ails you, Henrique?—tell me, tell me, why do you look at me so sorrowfully?”

“You ask a painful question,” said the young planter, again taking her hand, “which I will answer as freely as I dare. You do not know my uncle; I ought to have told you, ere you promised to make your home in our sad abode, how much of gloom your brightness would have to dispel. He is good to the poor, indulgent to his slaves, kind to everybody, and yet he is not happy.”

“I have heard this frequently mentioned.”—Julie blushed that she had kept from the knowledge of her lover even so slight a secret as her acquaintance with the current report of the Mauritius.

“I regret the good people of this island find

not other employment than troubling themselves with the sorrows of my uncle: these, deep and mysterious as they may be, never make him forget the duty he owes his brother planters."

"And you are angry with me for listening to what they say?" replied Julie to Henrique, who had drawn himself up to his full height, and was looking indignant enough to wage war with the whole colony in behalf of his relative.

The simple appeal, "You are angry with me," and the pressure of that small white hand which rested on his arm, recalled the young planter to a calmer mood, and he smiled as he said,—

"No, Julie; that would be impossible: I am only angry with those who will not let the kind, the generous, ay, even the hospitable Seyvret, rest in the secret of his own sorrow, instead of making him the subject of idle conversation."

"You know, dear Henrique," responded his

lovely companion apologetically, "I only told you what I had heard, that you might perceive, ere I consented to be yours, I was well acquainted with your uncle's peculiarity: my dread is, that, being so grave and so stern, he must be proud; and thus would wish that you should marry some rich planter's daughter, or perhaps send you to *la belle France*, that you might make a still grander alliance among the *noblesse*. He has so much money, he can do anything; and when people are grave and sad, though they seem to have the power of being otherwise, I always think they are ambitious; for the desire of gold, when we have already more than enough, must produce an unquiet mind."

Henrique soothed the fears of Julie, and much longer did they commune; but we refrain from taking further note of their converse, rejoicing, as we always do, in getting safely out of love affairs. A description of soft passages of the heart may be very right and pro-

per, and extremely like what has occurred, and will occur, on similar occasions, to the end of time ; yet may it prove too sweet for the reader who happens not to have a lovely girl peeping over his shoulder, perusing the descriptive page with him, as if half jealous that aught should claim a moment's regard, unshared by her.

The scene of our story is for the present laid in the fair Isle of France. The tradition which belongs to it is more than a hundred years old ; but when could the Mauritius have been otherwise than beautiful ?

Certainly, in 1705, it was a very fit spot for a young and happy couple to spend their honeymoon. Henrique Lemoine and Julie Morante were married with the full consent of Mons. Seyvret. Strict had been his inquiries respecting the connection his nephew desired to form. He ascertained that Mademoiselle Morante was the orphan daughter of a ruined planter, well educated ere his death, and though apparently not for her sins, most assur-

edly for the trial of her temper, left to the guardianship of an old aunt. This ancient maiden having, years before, made up her establishment in a zoological point of view, so far as a macaw, a monkey, a cage of avadavats, ditto love-birds, and a tom-cat, were concerned, could not but look on the portionless Julie as an interloper, and treated her accordingly.

The planter, after this investigation, had requested his nephew to introduce his affianced bride; and though she was somewhat appalled at the stern though handsome-looking stranger, who placed her hand in Henrique's, and bade Heaven bless them, she felt grateful that this awe-inspiring personage was sufficiently pleased with her to sanction the marriage. Mons. Seyvret had long permitted the young Lemoine to entertain his friends on an extensive scale of liberality, at a château which belonged to an estate a few miles from Fremont, their usual abode. But of this privilege his nephew seldom availed himself; having been contented, year

after year, to share his uncle's gloomy mansion, rather than forsake him in pursuit of youthful pleasures. Julie was too kindhearted not to sympathize in this feeling towards Henrique's benefactor; for such was the planter to his nephew, the child of a widowed sister, who, on the death of her husband, had withdrawn from the world into monastic retirement.

After their marriage, the lovers went to the estate—before mentioned as being allotted to Henrique—for a few days only; they then returned to Fremont, and in sincerity proposed that its melancholy occupant should allow them to make their abode with him. The workings of Seyvret's lofty brow, where the deeply traced lines told of long years passed in bitter meditation, and the glistening of his sunken eyes, showed how truly he estimated the sacrifice these young and amiable beings were about to make.

“You are asking to share a very gloomy home, Julie,” said he with mournful tenderness

as he looked on the bright creature before him. "Henrique has, of course, told you that I am not fitted even for domestic society. You will not see much of me;—I walk out unaccompanied, among my people, when they are at work; I shall meet you at meals, and stay with you for an hour in the evening, occasionally; the latter intercourse but seldom, and perhaps the more seldom the better, for I shall throw a shade over your happy face. We see no visitors, and the very servants have taken from their master a solemn air: your harp, which Henrique tells me you play, will never brace its chords to harmony in this saddened atmosphere; your song will be heard no more;—perhaps, did you care to sing, I could not listen without pain."

Julie heard all Monsieur Seyvret in grave and measured tone addressed to her, and then quietly answered, "Henrique has told me everything, and it is his wish and mine that we make our home with you."

This domestic arrangement was consequently carried into effect; the young people took up their abode at Fremont, and, in due course of time, the interdict against visitors was removed in favour of another young person, who seemed likely to make a considerable change in the establishment. Julie presented her husband with a little boy; and Mons. Seyvret took infinite delight in his great-nephew, even as a baby. He remained much more in the common sitting-room of the family; and, though still continuing many hours in a small chapel which communicated with his bed-chamber, at length all the portion of the day, not appropriated to devotion, he passed with the little Henrique or his delighted parents.

The lamp yet burned in the oratory at midnight, and again before daylight would its gleam appear as the slaves hurried to their tasks on the plantation, blessing their good master and wishing him better rest; but the planter was evidently losing much of the gloom

that had hung over him. The amiable and gentle assiduities of Julie had secured for her boy an interest in the heart of Seyvret: he felt once more the cheering influence of domestic society, and, in contemplating the happiness around him, seemed happy from very sympathy. No longer he went forth alone to the plantations; Henrique accompanied him, and together they concerted plans for the improvement of the estates, and amelioration of the slaves.

The birth of the little boy had been kept by the emancipation of five negroes, and each year it pleased Heaven to spare the future heir of the property, Seyvret declared should be marked by the freedom of five times as many slaves as the little Henrique numbered anniversaries; so that in all probability, ere he inherited the estate, a free peasantry would supersede the slave population.

The planter's dislike to society was not so easily conquered as his domestic moodiness;

but occasionally Henrique, with the permission of his uncle, invited to the house men of intelligence, more frequently travellers visiting the island than residents; and then would Seyvret surprise Julie and her husband by the vast store of information which he displayed on many topics of conversation, which he had till then avoided. In particular, the produce and capabilities of distant coasts; the habits of the aborigines, their religion and superstitions, wars and governments, together with their capabilities for European colonization. All these subjects had long been shunned by the planter, who never cared to show that he knew aught but what belonged to the Mauritius; the period of his stay in the colony being apparently the only part of his existence from whence was derived his conversational resources. It had till then even appeared a painful recollection that there were other lands in this wide world beside the Isle of France.

Such was the improved state of affairs at

Fremont, when accounts reached Seyvret that a large property had been left him in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux by the death of an only brother, for many years a dignitary of the Catholic church. The bequest was accompanied by this extraordinary proviso; that the planter should return to France in the course of one year after the accounts of his brother's death had been officially announced to him, or the estates were to swell the treasury of an Augustine monastery. The receipt of this intelligence seemed for a while to have undone the work of three years, for so many had passed since the marriage of Henrique; and during that period each month seemed gradually drawing the once gloomy and unhappy Seyvret within the pale of social fellowship. A report of the large property left to a well-known resident and proprietor was spread through the island by new arrivals from France; but Lemoine, though congratulated in all quarters on the brilliant pro-

spects which were opening to him in the mother country, received no communication on the subject from his uncle. Almost constantly in his oratory, he mixed even less with the family than had been his wont before the introduction of Julie into their establishment; and Henrique, for the first time in his life, determined on soliciting the confidence of his relative, whose mental suffering now seemed likely to produce melancholy madness. Habitual awe of his guardian, and the silent respect with which he had ever treated the sorrows on which he was about to intrude, made this a hard task. Seyvret, though in all other ceremonials a strict Catholic, had not a confessor:—was it likely, then, that he would unbosom himself to one whom he recollected a child, growing under his eye, whose mind he had formed, and whose experience could not avail him, if he refused the spiritual assistance enjoined by the church? “It must be tried, however,” thought

Henrique, as he sent an aged grey-headed negro, his uncle's constant attendant, to beg that admittance might be granted him, after the seclusion of his afflicted relative during two entire days.

Jumbo could not have long delivered his message, ere the door of the apartment where Henrique was pacing with hurried steps, waiting the effect of his experiment, opened, and his uncle entered. He looked under strong self-control rather than tranquil, and, holding out his hand to his nephew, he said, "I have distressed you, I know I have, by a sudden return to my old moody habit; and Julie too, I owe my apologies to her. Circumstances have occasioned me a hard mental struggle,"—here an involuntary shudder shook his frame,—“but it is past: I have determined to proceed to France; my boy shall have his noble inheritance.”

“Uncle,” replied Henrique respectfully, “I

will not disguise from you that I have heard of this sudden accession of property ; but if your desire to fulfil the conditions imposed on you for the sake of my child has caused you so much suffering, forget that these estates may be yours by such a sacrifice ; let us resume the tranquil mode of life we were enjoying when the ship Triton brought us this annoying news. You were looking in good health, sir, and in better spirits than I ever recollect to have seen you. Let me beg you to take no notice of any communication you may have received ; and the good friars of St. Augustine will, I dare say, settle the rest of the matter."

" Young man," said Seyvret gravely, " you are speaking lightly on a subject of which you know but little. I have determined on visiting France, where I shall take up my future residence. If you wish to accompany me, it may be necessary that Julie and yourself should make speedy preparation ; for the Triton is, I

believe, ready for her lading. This once we will be our own super-in-cargo, if my plan suits you."

"If, my dear sir!" quickly replied Henrique; "it is enough for Julie and myself that you mean to leave the Mauritius;—we shall at once decide on departing with you: moreover, I have long had a desire to see my mother; since her sorrow for the death of my father induced her to forsake the world, it is now more than twenty years;—our last information represented that her austerities had materially affected her health."

"We are agreed then on leaving the island," said Seyvret; "having taken up the whole of the ship, we can hasten her lading, and sail next week. I will myself see the master of her on the subject, while you prepare Julie for our unexpected movement."

The relatives parted, — the uncle, roused from his late fearful depression of spirits, in a state of feverish excitement to forward by

every arrangement in his power the sailing of the Triton; and the nephew satisfied that, whatever might have been the cause of disquietude which had suddenly influenced Mons. Seyvret, he had now gained that mastery over his feelings as, comparatively, to set at rest the anxiety of his friends. This was pleasing intelligence for Julie, who had expected a very different issue to the interview which Henrique had informed her he thought necessary to demand, that he might assure himself of his uncle's sanity or insanity. To a fond wife and mother, locality is ever of minor importance, if she be not separated from the objects of her affection; and though Madame Lemoine was so much attached to the island of her birth,—where since her marriage she had scarcely known sorrow,—that to leave the scene of their present happiness inspired her with vague alarm, she gave not a second thought to such regrets and imaginary fears. She busied herself

in preparing for the comforts of her darling boy during the voyage, and, readily taking the charge of providing all necessary cabin stores, she allowed her husband's undivided attention to be directed towards Mons. Seyvret.

The arrangement of their affairs in the Mauritius was soon effected, as the estates were already in the hands of a competent agent whose probity and diligence had been long tried; for their unhappy proprietor had trusted much to others, rather than rouse himself to the necessary mental exertion which the large transactions arising out of his plantations required. With a fair wind the voyagers left Port Louis, and many a tear marked their departure from eyes looking their last on a kind master; and many were the prayers offered up to that Great Spirit, which the African had forgotten to worship after the manner of his fathers, nor yet had learned to weary with the ceremonial of lip-service in a strange tongue;—but, by the Divinity in man he had been taught that the

aspirations of a grateful heart, supplicating for the welfare of a benefactor, would not be in vain. These manifestations of affection on the part of his slaves, who crowded to the shore, wailing in that peculiarly distressing plaint with which the negroes express their affliction, much affected Mons. Seyvret. The ship had left the shore, and yet the “Wah, wah, wah, onah !” of the faithful Africans came on the land breeze, which found the planter once more amid the wide waters. Never had he entered ship since his sojourn on the island : in vain he walked the deck with his young nephew in his arms ; everything conspired to recall painful remembrances, and the delight of the child disturbed him. Excited by the novelty of the scene, the little fellow was repeating his whole infantine vocabulary, in which negro patois was more apparent than his mother tongue, as if a jargon of the Mandingo, Foulah, and the Calabars, had been newly breathed into him by the kisses and

hugs he had been subjected to in his progression to the shore : never had he been half so eloquent, and consequently he was even more than usually interesting to Madame Lemoine. Gladly taking her boy from his uncle, she held him up to gaze at the receding island ; —there his black friends, with the exception of his nurse and old Jumbo, who were his fellow voyagers, seemed now like a dark line waving on the shore, and in another instant even this was lost in the white foam of the breakers.

Seyvret had gone below to his cabin, leaving Henrique and Julie playing with their child, who, after a while, being consigned to his attendant's care, the young father and mother commenced a bright picture of the future, where each was ready to aid the enthusiasm of the other, so that the little Henrique might be imagined all that was good and happy. Certainly, if riches could ensure happiness, a fair prospect of wealth was opened to their son, which many parents might have envied ; but

this was almost the last of their considerations. To Henrique, who had always known the command of money beyond the extreme of his expenditure, the accession of property which his uncle had already devoted to his child, had given more of pain than pleasure; while Madame Lemoine, looking back with a latent regret to the shores they had quitted, would willingly have compromised much wealth in a strange country she knew but by name, could they return once more to their happy home in the Mauritius. A casual remark from Julie on the cause of their voyage brought to Henrique's recollection the kind relative who, though his griefs were involved in mystery, had without doubt made a painful sacrifice from love to their little boy. He immediately sought Mons. Seyvret, whom he had the satisfaction of finding restored to composure.

Days now passed on as days ever will pass on board ship,—strange to say, rapidly, from their peculiar monotony, —until the Triton

was within a day's sail of the Cape of Good Hope, or, as the ancient mariners justly styled it, "The Cape of Storms." The only change which had taken place in the little circle which at present solicits our interest, was the illness of old Jumbo. The age of this faithful negro it was impossible to surmise, as he could not give any information which might lead to an elucidation of the point: but having been an aged man when he became the slave of his present master,—in whose service he had remained nearly twenty years,—Henrique ascribed the gradual decline of strength which marked Jumbo's disease to that decay of nature which might be justly expected. Mons. Seyvret either did not agree with his nephew in this particular, and considered his attendant likely to be sacrificed by the want of medical assistance, or had secret reasons which induced his extraordinary bearing; for no sooner was the negro confined to his berth than his master's agony of spirit was apparent to all. The planter

could not have numbered more than fifty years, but sorrow had made him look much older. It was a fearful thing to watch the master and servant communing in a strange language ;—Seyvret gesticulating as though he were urging the almost skeleton of a negro to rouse from his stupor, and rise from the bed on which he was lying ;—while Jumbo shook his grey woolly head, and gazed with leaden eye around, as he placed his hand, now on his head, now on his heart, muttering words which none could hear, or hearing comprehend, save him who, shuddering, listened to his dying slave. These extraordinary scenes had seldom any witness but Henrique ; and it chanced that soon after a meeting between Jumbo and his master, such as we have described, the negro died.

It was evening, and on the morrow the master of the Triton expected to make the Cape of Good Hope. Henrique had of late been so distressed at his uncle's state of mind, that he became as anxious to keep him in the cabin

appropriated to his immediate use, as he was once desirous of making him share in their social enjoyments;—for Julie scarcely dared to address the unhappy man, and even the child, alarmed at his nervous grasp and fierce gaze, shrank from his caresses. Mons. Seyvret had shut himself in his cabin immediately on being informed of Jumbo's death; and his nephew hoped that, the expected decease of the old slave having caused such excitement, the crisis past, he might once more behold his uncle restored to composure. The breeze, which had hitherto been as subservient to Julie's wishes as lady-passenger could desire, suddenly freshening, had made her seek her cot;—the boy slept, regardless of natural or moral convulsion; and Henrique, finding no companion below, ascended to the deck.

“ I like not the look of the night, Monsieur Lemoine,” said the captain, as his passenger put the eternal question of landsmen to sailors on their own element, “ What kind of weather

are we going to have?" "If ever I saw a storm brewing, I see it now.—I wish Monsieur Seyvret would allow old Jumbo's body to be sent over the side. I should have little fancy for a gale of wind with a corpse on board. It has an omen of ill luck."

"To me you need not address this," replied Henrique; "I would willingly gratify your superstition, for such in truth it is. Poor Jumbo! if we committed him at once to the deep, it would matter little to him; but my uncle is the authority to be referred to on this occasion, and he must not be disturbed to-night."

"Your uncle thanks you for your courtesy, Henrique," said Seyvret solemnly. Unobserved by his nephew and the captain, he had come on deck, and now stood between them. "Whether you cast the body of my negro forth to-night, or give it the decent ceremonial of a few prayers in the morning, I leave to your consideration; yet I would not have my old servant's remains treated like the carcase of a dog.

To-morrow, Monsieur le Capitaine, to-morrow—do what thou wilt with him and me.”

The conclusion of this unexpected interruption to the colloquy respecting the disposal of Jumbo's corse, was as abrupt as its commencement. Henrique, startled at the last extraordinary expression of his uncle, essayed to question him as to its meaning; but, waving his hand, as if imposing silence, he passed along the deck, and climbed into a quarter-boat where the negro's body had been laid out; leaving the master of the Triton and his young passenger in silent astonishment. The former, from respect to his present employer, was unwilling to hint his suspicions that Mons. Seyvret was deranged, though this was a conclusion at which Lemoine had nearly arrived. He clasped his hands, and strained his eyes in the direction of the boat, where, as well as he could discern in the gloom, his uncle was removing a sail which covered the face of the deceased. A dread that his next action might be to fling himself into the waves,—now heaving the vessel with that

long motion betokening a coming storm,—induced the anxious relative to draw nearer.

The captain thought it advisable to take in more sail, and left him to give the necessary orders: in a few minutes the deck was passed and repassed by the seamen in the required service; but Henrique still kept his eye on his uncle, intending to spring on the quarter, and secure him, should he make an attempt to throw himself overboard. Nor was this watchfulness unregarded by Seyvret, who, having finished his communion with the dead,—of whatever character it might have been,—replaced the sail and joined his nephew. The few stars that looked on that solitary ship, ploughing through the rising waters, seemed to have receded from their spheres, and gleamed in the far distance amid dark clouds that caverned round them;—thus the wretched man's features were hidden, but with a firm voice he said,

“ You have been watching me, Henrique; nay, wherefore deny it ! I know it was not from curiosity to see how an old master might repeat

a paternoster over the corse of a too faithful servant. You believe me a maniac who may destroy himself? Well, no wonder: but this night—a fitting night”—and here the planter gazed around on the coming tempest,—“you shall hear my story; I feel that it draws to its catastrophe.”

Seyvret grasped the hand of his nephew, and wrung it with violence; then hurrying along the deck, he descended into the general cabin, followed by Henrique; and from thence passed into a state-room where a swinging lamp burned over a table, on which papers,—some strewn in careless confusion, and others made into packets,—were spread on either side, before a large chair in which it appeared the planter had been engaged, arranging a multitude of documents.

“This looks not like mental aberration, nephew!” said Seyvret, as he took his seat and motioned Henrique to place himself on a couch.

“Excuse me, dear sir ; indeed it was but my anxiety for your safety. It was only your strange remark that to-morrow the captain might act as he pleased, not only with Jumbo but yourself.”

“Did I say so ?” asked the planter musingly, responding to this earnest apology ; “well, perhaps I may survive the night. However, nature cannot stand this dread much longer.”

Here he became violently excited. “I have seen the dead, Henrique Lemoine !”

“I know it, sir ; he was an attached servant, but so stricken in years that we could not expect that he would remain long with us,” rejoined the nephew in a tone of soothing which generally fails to calm the wretched, and in that case is sure to be received ungraciously.

“Boy !” exclaimed the agitated man, “I must not be talked to as a child. I want no commiseration. It is not Jumbo I mean, but he whom Jumbo”—

Seyvret shuddered as he suddenly paused,

and for a while looked with much earnestness in Henrique's face. He then went to a beaufet, and brought forth wine and glasses. He had become unnaturally calm.

“Does Julie sleep? and my boy, my darling boy?”—a burning tear dried on his pallid cheek. “Well! there is no warring with destiny: had it not been for little Henrique, I might still have been in the Mauritius, instead of once more off this Cape of Storms. I think the captain said we were within less than twelve hours' sail of Agullas.”

“We are, sir,” replied Henrique, who wonderingly regarded his uncle's change of manner; “it is this which makes him so anxious about the appearance of the night.”

“It is an ugly place to be in during a gale of wind.”

Seyvret smiled as he made this remark. Henrique had seldom seen him smile except when playing with the little boy; and some strange meaning seemed now thrown into a

ghastly brightness which spoke less of mirth than mental agony. The young man started from his seat.

“Stay !”—his uncle laid a hand heavily on his arm ;—“interrupt me not, I have much to communicate, and, perhaps, little time.”

He here glanced hastily at a watch that lay on the table before him, the hands of which pointed at eleven o’clock. Henrique reseated himself; and Seyvret, after pouring wine into his nephew’s glass, quaffed a large goblet of water ;—then, leaning back in his chair, he commenced his narrative.

“My father, and your grandfather, was a wealthy planter in Martinique. I was his eldest born, and, but for circumstances which I will relate in as few words as possible, should have inherited the bulk of his property. My father had another son, who, showing a decided predilection for the priesthood, was sent to France that he might be educated for the sacred calling he had chosen. At length he held high

office in the church, as you already know. Your mother had, by an early marriage with a gentleman of small fortune,—who in the course of his travels sojourned some months at Martinique,—much offended my father; and, making but a slight settlement on her ere she accompanied her husband to France, he refused to hold further communication with his disobedient daughter. I was his pride; and the babblers of our colony—who, like those we have left behind us in the Mauritius, could not find converse but on the affairs of their neighbours,—scrupled not to say he had gladly seized excuse to make small provision for his two younger offspring, that he might be the better able to heap treasure on me. Bitterly I repaid his undue partiality. Instead of attending to the affairs of our plantations, I squandered both time and money in excesses which were the scandal of the island. I believe many a father had to curse the day when his son became my associate. But let

that pass : I have enough of my own sins to answer for."

Seyvret paused for a moment, and listened to the noise of the waves as the vessel rolled through a heavy sea.

"Do you attend to me, Henrique?" asked he again, throwing himself back in his chair.

"I am too much interested not to be attentive to every word, sir," replied his nephew.

"Then drink your wine, boy, and I will proceed. My father day by day entreated me to control my wild career of dissipation. I treated his remonstrances lightly, and asked him if my health and time were not mine own; or whether the richest planter in Martinique could be inconvenienced by paying a few gambling debts for his son, when he had but trifling expenses of his own to trouble him. My unhappy parent too often accepted such badinage in lieu of promises of amendment. At length, in the course of my intimacy with the Creole population, which, much to the

annoyance of my father, I sought more than he imagined belonged to the dignity of a planter's son, I became acquainted with two sisters, equally lovely in person, but different in mind as good from evil. Josephine and Mariette lived under the protection of their mother, if protection hers could be called, who waited but to sell their charms to the best bidder. Madame Dubourg's family consisted of her two daughters and a son, then a boy of twelve years of age.—Gracious Heaven, how the ship rolls !”

The vessel had made a lee lurch, and the bottle which was before Henrique slipped from the cords that had steadied it, and broke ; while a red stream flowed along the table toward Seyvret. The planter bathed his white handkerchief in the wine to stay its course ; and, wildly gazing on the stained cambric, muttered, “ I did not slay him—I did not slay him !”

“ My dear sir, why continue your story ?—

it agitates you: let me request you to postpone this painful narration."

"Henrique!" exclaimed the excited man, in answer to his nephew's proposal, "there will be no postponement; everything draws to a close.—Yet did I once think that I had found mercy. Years of penitence, fasts, and vigils,—they must weigh in the balance."

Seyvret seemed to be in silent prayer for a moment; then, taking no further notice of Henrique's interruption, he continued his story.

"When I first made the acquaintance of the two Creole girls, the ardent and impassioned Josephine enslaved my imagination, and I determined to make her my mistress. You are aware such an arrangement in the colonies gives not the scandal to morality which ever attends a connection of the kind in the mother country. This was for the consideration of Josephine and her mother; I cared little for laws, human or divine.

Some slight attentions shown to Mariette, before I had actually explained my wishes, so enraged the elder sister, who from the first had imagined her conquest certain, that the mask which concealed the violence of her temper was for a moment laid aside. Furious were her expostulations with me, and my love was changed into thorough disgust. I therefore congratulated myself that my original intention was unknown; and, becoming more and more enamoured of the fair and gentle Mariette, concluded my arrangements with Madame Dubourg by taking an establishment for her younger daughter. Josephine's rage and disappointment were manifested in uncontrolled abuse of her sister, and for many months she entered not the cottage in which we were secluded. I now quite abandoned my wild associates; and so sincere did I find the affection of Mariette, and so perfectly infatuated was I with her beauty,—Henrique, it was of no common order,—that, in utter defiance of my

father, I married her. A father's curse falls heavily even on the most thoughtless, and this curse was mine. I had taken the precaution of drawing largely on my aged parent before I so irreconcilably displeased him ; and for the short time my wife was allowed, by demons in the form of women, to remain with me, we suffered little inconvenience except in prospect, and I still hoped my father would reinstate me in his favour. Now, boy, listen !”

Here Seyvret threw himself forward in his chair, and fixed his eyes on those of his nephew. — “ Mariette was murdered !—ay, you may start ;—she was murdered, and by her sister !—I must hurry through the scenes of horror which first made me familiar with deeds of death.”

The planter again reclined in his chair, and, mastering his agitation, continued. “ So exasperated had I felt at Josephine's conduct, that, even on receiving divers conciliatory letters, I refused to admit her within my doors. With

Mariette, who was too amiable to continue at variance, it appeared she was more successful. My poor wife had lately given birth to a boy, who survived but a few hours. I suppose Josephine must have communicated with her sister through Madame Dubourg. We had an old negress in the cottage who nursed me when an infant, and I thought her faithful. I knew not the hag's failing;—she would have wrapt the world in flame, could she have smelted gold from its bowels.

“One day I returned unexpectedly home, and to my surprise met Josephine at the door: on seeing me she uttered a faint scream, and would have fled. I saw, in her confusion and alarm, more than could be attributed to annoyance at being detected in a stolen visit. I know not what possessed me to stop her, but I did so: I forced her back into her sister's room. There, seated by the bed, was old Sophie.—The hell-cat was deaf: she heard us not; she was counting gold,—it was the price of life,—

Mariette was dead !—I stood transfixed with horror ;—but this was only the inaction of a moment. The old wretch on seeing me uttered a cry, and stretched out her yellow fingers to clutch a powder which was on a little table near her. Quick as lightning's gleam did the fatal truth strike me.—I flung the wretched Josephine from me, and, seizing the negress by the throat, I bore her back in her chair till the grey head of the old murderess came in violent collision with the corner of a marble slab ;—I heard the stone crash through her skull, but I looked not another second at my work of retribution. Josephine had moved from the corner of the room where I had thrown her, and was about to escape ;—but, no ! save through the gates of death, there was no escaping from my vengeance !”

Seyvret became fearfully agitated, and Henrique almost quailed under the fierce glance of his eye. “ I dragged her to the table, I forced the hellish powder down her throat : in vain she resisted—in vain she called for help—there

was not another soul in the cottage. The drug was a strong vegetable poison, well known to the negroes; I detected it in its effects, which were immediate. Josephine wept, knelt, servilely besought me for an antidote. I pointed to her sister's corpse—the corpse which I now for the first time approached. There was a beautiful repose in that sleep of death;—had my beloved Mariette met her fate otherwise, I could have wept for her, but now I was intent on revenge.

“I will not prolong the scene, nephew,” said the planter, breathing heavily,—for the moment quite exhausted by his emotion. “I continued contemplating the body of my beloved till her sister's cries ended in the gaspings of dissolution, and she fell dead by the side of the negress. A movement in the hall now called my attention; hurrying to meet whoever it might be, I found it was a negro boy, the only male attendant at the cottage. Sending him on a distant message, I did not trust myself to look

again on Mariette ; but, saddling my horse, I galloped to my father's house and insisted on seeing him. After much importunity I succeeded, and told him the scene of death in which I had been engaged. My unfeigned wretchedness seemed to appease some portion of his ire against me ; I received an order for five thousand dollars on a house at Amsterdam, with the promise of a bequest to the same amount at his death, and in a few hours I was on my way to Europe in a vessel bound to Holland. Had I so chosen, I might, by soliciting the exertion of my father's influence with the authorities, have remained in the colony : but worn out by my misconduct, and mortified by the disgrace I had brought on him, he urged my departure ; and to me any spot in the world was preferable to Martinique. My passionate grief for the loss of Mariette gradually subsided, and at length merged into the stern satisfaction with which I called to mind my vengeance on her murderers.

“ Ere I reached Europe, the past seemed to me but as a trifling episode in existence. I felt for the first time in my life about to enter on the great theatre of the world. At Martinique I was always a venturous sailor; in a large decked boat often passing days on the ocean, to my own wild enjoyment and the great alarm of my father. My inclination only wanted this long voyage,—during which our vessel met with every variety of weather, and touched at many ports,—to be confirmed in favour of a sea life. Arrived at Amsterdam,—the busy mart of commerce, the heart of enterprise,—by advice of the master commanding the ship in which I had visited Holland,—who knew well my reckless character,—I soon turned my dollars to advantage, and purchased a large share in a slaver trading to the western coast of Africa. On board this vessel I embarked as mate under a feigned name;—improved myself in seamanship, and materially increased my capital by the first trip. After serving in a subordinate situation

another voyage, I commanded a ship belonging to the same parties with whom I had engaged in this slaving speculation, and continued invariably successful until I approached my thirtieth year: a success which was latterly marked by one peculiarity, which continued till I abandoned the sea. Henrique,” said the planter,—his face, which had been flushed by excitement, now becoming bleached and livid,—“but that I know my hour is at hand, I would defer the rest of this story.”

“Do, sir, let me entreat you! The ship does not labour as she did; I believe the wind is going down; we might get a few hours’ rest.”

“Rest!” said Seyvret; “when we are in the south-east trade, and running to St. Helena, then I may rest. No, no;—I must pursue my narrative to its end. He came to me; he beckoned me!—How know I but that you and Julie, and my darling boy, will all be sacrificed? Accursed Jonah that I am! I pray Heaven it may not be,—that I may go alone. But, see!

it is nearly midnight ; the wind will freshen, nephew ; the——”

Here the wretched man paused, as if a word hovered on his lips to which he dared not give utterance. He staggered to the beaufet, and drank a goblet of brandy ; an act of apparent intemperance which Henrique had never before seen his uncle guilty of, and he fully expected to behold him fall senseless in his chair. When the overwrought mind has induced prostration of the nervous system, alcohol, even when taken in quantities unusually copious to the drinker, often braces the nerves without producing intoxication ; such was the case in the present instance. Seyvret resumed his story ; and Henrique availed himself of the same stimulant, but considerably diluted, as his uncle proceeded.

“ I said there was a peculiarity attendant on all my latter voyages : my vessel, which was called the Hamburg, a barque of five hundred tons, a good sailer, and the best craft among

the many in which I had an interest,—for by this time I had amassed a large property,—never made a voyage with me that I was not in imminent danger of shipwreck. Being now in the habit of occasionally communicating with my brother, he took the licence of relationship, and suggested that the traffic in which I was engaged, was not the most lawful in a moral or religious point of view. He told me that my frequent perils were warnings to abandon the slave trade. On shore, I invariably laughed at his preaching : but at sea, all the arguments he had used, both by letter and in conversation when we at times met, came home to my heart with double force ; and certain was I, on some occasion or other during the voyage, to cry to Heaven for help ;—when human aid seemed vain, imploring the intercession of the saints at the throne of mercy, and promising in return never to prosecute the slave trade more. Four times did my repentance in the hour of danger seem to avail me ; the vessel which I com-

manded almost miraculously escaping destruction. This fatality had even followed me into a strange craft; for, though the barque bravely weathered every storm, I had—to change my fortune as I imagined—latterly given her up to one of the captains in our employ, and had taken charge of a large brig: but fate was not to be so disarmed.

“I am now coming to my last voyage,” continued Seyvret, drawing a deep breath, and speaking slowly and emphatically, as he paused for a second between each brief sentence. “I had come into port after, as usual, a narrow escape from the perils of shipwreck. Once on shore,—or, I may say, once the epoch of danger past, which I had begun to consider a kind of crisis incidental to my voyages,—I again forgot all my vows of amendment, nor could I give up the excitement of slaving, which was become in me an actual passion. In a week I longed to be again afloat; and the ‘Hamburg,’ my old vessel, happening to be ready for sea, I

took command of her, and left Holland to procure a cargo of slaves for the Mauritius. The crew was the same with which I had before sailed: my mate was a new hand, he had been shipped during the last voyage; but I found him very expert in the necessary negotiations with the native chiefs on the coast, and he was evidently an old slaver. I had not then learned, Henrique, to treat the negroes as our fellow-creatures; and, I must confess, many were the scenes of coercion, if not of cruelty, enacted on board my ship: but this mate, who was a strict Catholic in his fasts and prayers, and wore a cross and some relics about his person, was withal imbued with a still greater disregard for the feelings of our wretched cargo than myself. I, from motives of interest, tried to preserve my property from injury; but he, on all occasions, buffeted and maimed with less consideration than a cattle-driver would show to the animals under his charge. Yet he was young and handsome, nor looked the harsh and cruel man

each hour proved him. You may think it strange, Henrique, that I, for many years the master of a slaver, should make these remarks ; but, as I have said before, I was never wanton in my cruelty. All that was necessary for the success of a voyage was done. I would no more have smote a slave without cause than I would have struck a horse or a dog unnecessarily : such was my feeling,—his delight was in giving pain.”

Seyvret slowly turned his head from right to left, as if he expected further audience than his nephew, who heartily wished that noonday had been chosen for this recital rather than midnight ;—and yet so intent was the listener, that his eyes would become fixed on the solemn countenance of the narrator, till they smarted from distension. Then would he pass his hand across his temples, and wish the night well over.

“ In the mate’s features,” continued the planter, “ there was a certain expression, which came and went, that often reminded me of other

days. We called him Jacopo Manielli, and he looked like an Italian ; yet he spoke French well, and once, talking of Martinique, incautiously owned his name assumed, and that he was a native of the colony. His real appellation he could not be induced to mention, but I was confirmed in a suspicion which I cared not to make known : he was the brother of Mariette—the brother of her murderess, Josephine. Jacopo knew me not ; I determined to keep him in this ignorance, and when we reached our first port, to discharge him, for his presence disturbed me with thoughts which had long slept. It was during this voyage,—now sixteen years ago,—that I first met Jumbo : an old man even then ; so old, that, on finding him amongst a number of slaves I was about to purchase from a chief on the Whidah coast, I picked him out and refused to take him ; but the poor wretch flung himself on his knees, and besought me to become his master. He had been rejected by two other slave captains, and knew his fate : a prisoner

taken in war, the chief would not be longer troubled with him ;—one blow of a club, and the old negro's bones would have whitened on the shore. Nephew, the saints know I was never a hard man.—I have been heavily visited for vows unfulfilled.”

The planter struck his hand on his forehead with violence, and looked up to the sky-light. There had been a lull in the storm, but now it raged with redoubled fury.

“ I must hasten my story,” continued Seyvret. “ I told you the wind would rise again. Listen ;—my time is short. I took compassion on Jumbo, and the old man felt that I had saved his life. I employed him in my cabin as a servant : never did I see such intense, such devoted attachment. I thought this feigned at first, but too soon was it proved ; and years have since confirmed me in my opinion of his fidelity. Life and limb, soul and body, he was mine. I became his deity. In the Mauritius he was baptised, but his religion was devotion

to my will. If I attempted instruction in holy truths, he would listen, and, shaking his head, say, ‘ Master love God, I love him ; master go to heaven, I go to heaven ; master go to hell, I go with master ;—that enough to know for Jumbo.’ Poor faithful wretch !” exclaimed the planter ; “ how can I but recall his blind and reckless services ? You know some of them, Henrique ; you know his honesty, his gentle bearing ; and yet, of all Jumbo’s services, that which to the last he believed had been most pleasing to his master was—murder !

“ There had been a passage of violence between me and Jacopo, the occasion of which I will tell you anon. I *will* tell it ; it shall not be said I died a maniac,—the prey of imaginary evil ; but, when I have told that tale of horror, I shall have power for nought else. Prior to this dispute, I had reason to believe that Manielli had been examining my papers when I was absent from the cabin, and by some chance must have discovered my real designation.

A few hours afterwards—no ! no ! not yet—'tis enough to say I was in his power—he called me the murderer of his sister.—He drew his knife, and on my own deck would have plunged it into my heart. But Jumbo's eye was on him ; in a moment the weapon, wrested from the grasp of the assassin, was plunged into his own side."

"That was not murder, uncle," said Henrique, glad to exculpate the favourite of his boyhood, the kind, the gentle old negro, who but a few days ago was the patient endurer of his child's infantine fancies,—who, if the little boy slept in his arms, would remain motionless for hours, if but allowed to continue his nurse.—"I am glad you wronged the good old man ;—the mate met his death justly."

"Stop, nephew — he would have died justly then ;—but he survived the wound some hours. It was an after-deed of Jumbo's I called murder. Alas ! I almost shared his crime. That voyage—that last voyage of mine,—was not

without its storm and dangers: oh! how did I outlive the fatal night? After the tempest I dare not yet refer to, we anchored off the Cape. I was about to land and represent to the Dutch authorities the attempt which had been made upon my life, and to deliver up my prisoner. Manielli was confined in his own berth under charge of Jumbo. I had just visited the unhappy wretch to inform him that I should press the execution of laws, which among the strict Dutch colonists well avenged mutiny, and bid him prepare for the event. My intimation was not likely to be well received; but never yet did I hear taunts so maddening poured by man on man as those with which he overwhelmed me. Jacopo had a secret—a damning secret—not many hours old. He heard my impious prayer—he saw it answered. I was enraged, and as I left the cabin gave the key to Jumbo, with so much discomfiture of manner, that the negro in his native tongue asked, ‘Is he dead?’

“ ‘ Would that he was,’ I petulantly said, and proceeded on deck to go on shore.

“ After having arranged with the authorities to make over the prisoner that evening, I returned on board and went to my cabin. The African was engaged in some trifling office at a beaufet ; I asked him how fared Jacopo. He replied, ‘ Just as master wished him—dead.’ ‘ Dead !’ I exclaimed : ‘ you have not killed him — I never bade you murder him !’—I seized the old man by the throat. ‘ Master wish him dead in Jumbo’s tongue, and Jumbo let him die. When master ordered the Wiydah man to be thrown to the sharks and draw him up again, it was done.’

“ The negro referred to an act which I then thought a justifiable cruelty. In consequence of frequent suicides by jumping overboard, one of the slaves,—discovered when about to commit self-destruction—had, by my directions, a rope tied round his middle, and was then cast to the sharks. Lacerated by these monsters,

he was hauled on board and allowed to die on the deck. This fearful example succeeded, and I had congratulated myself on the expedient, but now I saw the fruits of my cruelty in another murder, and loosed my grasp of the old man. Jumbo, literally to fulfil my wishes,—which he considered required but to be expressed,—had torn the dressing from Manielli's side, and, to use his own words, 'let him die.' — Nephew, thou hast a bold heart, — I know thou hast. I have but one thing more to tell. It was the cause of my attempted assassination by the mate. Smarting with his recently discovered wrongs,—for such he fancied them,—he cursed me as a wizard, and tried to slay me. It was the cause, when holier means had failed, of making me give up my inhuman traffic, resume my name, and purchase property, ay, even respectability, in the Mauritius."

The planter rose from his chair and attempted to pace the cabin, but the violent mo-

tion of the vessel prevented him : he clung to a stanchion ; and his nephew, alarmed at his increased excitement, left the couch as if to approach him.

“ Come not near me, Henrique !” he exclaimed ; “ if I must go, let me go alone—Jacopo has warned me. The tempest is rising—the time is at hand. It was in these seas,—it was on such a night as this, when the raging winds roared around my bark,—I knew it to be the crisis of my voyage. Once more I mocked the saints with prayers, and called on Heaven for succour ;—still the tempest howled ! The main-mast went by the board ;—the vessel strained as though her seams opened and shut again ;—my old fears came over me. Wildly did I pour forth my agony of supplication,—now in the cabin with bended knees, now on the deck, as I gazed on the shattered spars—the binnacle dashed to atoms—the barque running, as it seemed, on certain destruction ! What would

I not have given for the blaze of the fiercest lightning which ever blinded man, so that some eye amongst us might descry the coast ! But no ! The clouds above, the sea below,—all, all was blackness. Then did I blaspheme the powers of Heaven—taunt at the holy saints—laugh them to scorn in very madness, denying their might to save. Henrique, I in that hour swore an infernal oath.—On that dark deck, my vessel hurrying none knew where, I yelled for help :—my sailors thought me mad ; would that I had been, and not accountable for my crime ! ‘ Heaven fights against me,’ I cried ; ‘ let then the powers of hell save,—guide us to port, if by the flames of purgatory, and the storm-ship for our pilot. Save me, and I will serve at hell’s own wages ! I had sunk on the deck ;—the men were clinging to the bulwarks ; the mate, Jacopo, stood by me,—he alone understood my exclamation,—I had not another Frenchman in the ship. A shout of astonish-

ment sounded on my ears; several voices cried out, ‘Helm hard down!’—I raised my head from the deck,—a blaze of supernatural light was around us,—a burst of thunder shook the skies;—and a large Dutch-built ship, staggering under a storm-sail, was standing into False Bay: another instant, and we should have been wrecked on Cape Hanklip. The danger was only perceived at the exact moment to avoid it: we followed the stranger,—the barque was saved. It was then, as I held by the wreck of the mainmast, Manielli rushed on me. ‘Murderer and wizard son of hell!’ he cried; and, but for Jumbo, I should too soon have commenced my service in that floating purgatory which yet piloted us. I saw him dragged from me, but I scarcely felt that I had been assailed. I spoke not, I clung to that riven spar.—There was the storm-ship revealed by every lightning blaze—I had sold myself to hell! Henrique,” exclaimed Seyvret, “the penalty must be paid!

I have prayed against it,—long years of fast and penance have not availed me;—my brother has treated my visitation as a fantasy,—he has jured me to my fate. For my boy's sake I yielded. This night hath Jacopo come to me.—Ah! 'tis he—he comes again:—see there! there! there!”

Seyvret flung himself towards the door of the cabin, and rushed up the companion ladder, quickly followed by his nephew. As Henrique reached the deck, a sheet of flame lit the horizon, and the instant thunder-burst told that the electric fluid was close to the labouring vessel. His nerves had been so unstrung by the strange recital he had listened to, that this sudden change in the character of the storm for the moment appalled him; but the fear that had induced Henrique to pursue his uncle restored him to energy. Where was the unhappy Seyvret? Ere the question could be asked of the watch on deck, a heavy sea struck

the vessel; again the waves, the sky, the distant headlands, were illumined with vivid flame. Had Henrique partaken of his uncle's madness?—staggering to the ship's side, he flung his arms above his head and sunk senseless on the deck. Revealed by that lightning blaze, a large vessel had appeared to him on the larboard bow; and, impelled along the raging waters which glowed like a sea of fire, a boat made towards the strange ship; a single passenger was there—it was Seyvret!

The sailors on the deck were busily engaged, and it was some minutes ere Henrique was discovered; he was in a state of unconsciousness. When carried below, his first question was for his uncle; a question which he trembled to hear answered. The planter had been observed to rush on deck, and make towards the quarter-boat which contained the corpse of the negro: some of the sailors declared he had been washed from the deck by the same sea, which, striking

the quarter, had carried away the cutter; but the captain was positive that he must have climbed into the boat, or thrown himself over the side, as the force of the sea went astern, and not inboard. Attempt at succour in such a tempest was impossible; and Henrique with much caution pursued his inquiry, while he carefully abstained from mentioning the fantasy which had possessed him. A strange sail had been seen on the larboard bow during the evening; and he encouraged in himself a belief that, so far as related to the phantom of the storm-ship, he was under the influence of an excited imagination.

Julie sincerely sympathized in his affliction at the violent death of Mons. Seyvret; for such, either by accident or suicide, it appeared to be: but the attached husband, for the first time since his marriage, kept a secret from his wife, and Madame Lemoine heard not the revelations of that night of horror. The storm

subsided towards day-break, and the vessel was found to have run past the Cape. The necessity of beating back to that port was soon evident, as the Triton had strained much in the gale, and sprung a leak. After great delay in making good her repairs at Cape Town, she continued her voyage ; and, meeting with adverse winds, it was not till the fourth month had elapsed after her sailing from the Mauritius, that the ship reached France.

The vessel's destination was Bordeaux, which port was at length gained in safety. Henrique, placing his wife and child at an hotel, sought the habitation of Mons. Tellier, the late abbé's agent. Much to his disappointment, this official character was from home. On inquiry as to the probable time of his return, no definite period could be named by the clerk. — His principal was gone into the country on particular business : if Monsieur was very anxious

to see the notary, he might follow him to Le Château St. Florent—the late residence of the deceased abbé. Ascertaining the distance to be little more than three miles from Bordeaux, Henrique obtained a horse and proceeded there.

On approaching St. Florent, the young planter, upon whom the luxuries and splendour of the parent country were fast working that effect which is generally experienced by colonists on a first arrival, could not help feeling a regret that so fair a possession had passed from his son. The abbé had inherited the whole property of his father in consequence of his elder brother's misconduct; but though sharing in the prejudice which his parent entertained against the connection his sister had formed, and consequently perpetuating his quarrel with her even after she had withdrawn into the seclusion of a nunnery, he had ever continued in friendly

communication with his brother. Thus he considered that, after his own decease, the family could not have a more proper representative than the eldest son of his father. The scandal of his youthful days the abbé justly imagined had been forgotten; nor was the slave-dealer known as a Seyvret while accumulating the fortune which he had invested to so much advantage at the Isle of France. Nothing had seemed to prevent the natural inheritor of the churchman's property taking that position in society due—in the opinion of its proud possessor—to the heir of a dignitary who was promised a bishopric, but the fantasy, considered by him little better than monomania, which had made the planter resolve never to attempt another voyage. For years had the brothers corresponded on this subject; and the abbé had exhausted every argument with Seyvret, to prove the vision he had beheld the effect of imagination, and that the sea remained open to him—free of supernatural appearances—as though

he had never called the penalty on his head which caused him so much uneasiness. As a dernier resort, the anxious brother had reminded the planter that he had already tried the experiment of a voyage in proceeding from the Cape to the Mauritius; but all discussion on this point was at once set at rest by the unhappy man, who declared that a removal from the scene of his awful visitation had then become necessary, or madness would have ensued. Moreover, the Isle of France offered an entirely new mode of life, which he trusted might restore his mind to a natural tone of health, and thus he had been induced to become a settler there; but the mental torment he endured during the time that he was on his voyage from the Cape, had determined him to make his present home his grave.

The persevering churchman, it appeared, though baffled in his endeavours during life, forgot not his favourite scheme at his death.

Caring little to benefit the son of his sister, but at the same time taking advantage of the affection his brother entertained for their nephew,—a desire for whose aggrandizement might influence him when even the arguments of a skilful casuist had failed,—the abbé made it imperative on the planter to visit France, or the property was to pass from him and his heirs forever;—a provision, the result of which we are at present narrating. Much of this information Henrique had gathered from Mons. Seyvret's papers, which were arranged with a precision bespeaking little of that wild excitement which had marked the last interview between the relatives; though a letter addressed to Mons. Tellier,—now about to be delivered by Henrique,—bore date the evening of his uncle's extraordinary disappearance.

“And this might have been my boy's!” thought the young planter, as he rode up the broad avenue leading to the splendid mansion before him. “Well, as the heir of my beloved

benefactor, I shall still have enough of wealth to bestow on him. Heaven grant that he inherit not the madness which I fear must belong to our family ! My poor uncle, up to the moment of his destruction, remained a victim to the extraordinary infatuation which had so long possessed him ; while I can hardly school myself into believing the vision I saw on that night of horrors a mere phantom of the excited brain. It haunts me still :—would that we had never left the Mauritius ! —would that I had never heard that dreadful tale !”

Such cogitations brought Henrique to the door of the château. A carriage was in waiting ; and the whole exterior of the establishment wore an air of occupancy which spoke much for the care of the notary, whose equipage he supposed was before him. “ Surely the agent must make this his country residence,” thought the young planter as he dismounted from his horse, and put forth his hand to pull the

hall-bell : the doors opened, and a servant in sombre but handsome livery respectfully awaited his commands.

“ Is Monsieur Tellier here ? ” inquired Henrique ; “ I have a letter for him.”

“ He is with my master,” replied the powdered domestic.

“ Your master !—is not the abbé dead ? ”

“ Yes, Monsieur ; he has been dead some months : his brother from the Mauritius, Monsieur Seyvret, is my present master ;—the notary is with him.”

Henrique staggered to a seat which the servant promptly offered, supposing the stranger to have been taken suddenly ill. Was his uncle alive, or was he himself labouring under a mental delusion ? Silently he sat for a moment ; and then, accepting a glass of water, he desired the notary might be informed a gentleman wished to see him on an affair of importance. Conducted into an apartment which bespoke the wealth of its possessor, he tried to

compose himself for the interview with the man of business ; and had partially succeeded, when a flippant, bustling little lawyer entered the room. With an excess of volubility, Mons. Tellier begged Henrique would be seated. “ To what was he indebted for the honour of knowing Monsieur ? He rather regretted that the announcement of a stranger awaiting him had been suddenly mentioned within hearing of the *distingué* owner of the château, who was an invalid, and daily expecting the arrival of dear relatives from the Mauritius. Had Monsieur any tidings respecting the ship Triton ? ”

“ My name is Lemoine,” answered Henrique, breaking through the restraint he had placed on his feelings ;—“ how is my uncle ?—tell me, I conjure you, Monsieur. Is it possible that he can be alive ? By what—— ”

“ Compose yourself, compose yourself,” interrupted the notary ; “ I do beg you will sit

down again, my dear sir, I entreat you : Monsieur Seyvret must not be informed of your arrival without much caution. It is not strange that you should be surprised, if you have not heard particulars of the escape of your respected relative. It is the talk of Bordeaux—ay, of all France.”

Henrique explained that he had not been more than three hours in port ; and, very anxious to elicit all he could from the talkative lawyer without committing himself, he allowed his informant to proceed uninterruptedly, till the following facts were made known to him.

The morning after the disappearance of Seyvret he was picked up by a homeward-bound English vessel, in the cutter of the Triton : he was perfectly insensible, and, with the body of the old negro, had been found jammed between the thwarts of the boat. The rescued man had continued in a great state of exhaustion during the passage to Europe ; and,

off the coast of France, he was, by his own request, transferred from the English ship to a French pilot-boat; thus reaching Bordeaux about a month before the arrival of Henrique. Giving his name and position, the planter had represented to the master of the British vessel that he had been washed from the side of the Triton in a boat containing the body of his servant. This information had been received with considerable caution, as the stranger evidently disliked to be more explanatory on the subject; but, content to know that a distressed individual required assistance, the Englishman had treated Mons. Seyvret with much care and attention: moreover, supplying him with a small sum of money for immediate purposes, the second mate of the vessel was directed to see the forlorn sufferer safe under the protection of his friends. This did not, at first, appear so easy a task as had been represented; since Mons. Tellier, when the planter made known his arrival,

was much inclined to doubt his identity; nor were the worthy friars of St. Augustine less incredulous, until the testimony of Madame Lemoine went far to establish the claims of her brother. His pretensions were at length further confirmed by the arrival of a letter, despatched by Seyvret from the Mauritius, to Mons. Tellier, in a vessel which sailed a few days before the Triton: with the contents of this the notary had been already made acquainted by the now no longer suspected stranger, who was consequently installed in his late brother's château, and had only to await the necessary legal forms which would put him in full possession of the whole inheritance. Seyvret had with impatience expected the arrival of the Triton; and, soon after reaching France, his health being partially restored, he had taken much apparent satisfaction in preparing his establishment for the reception of his nephew's family. Prolonged anxiety respecting these beloved relatives had

once more brought him to a bed of sickness; but Mons. Tellier concluded his long detail by stating it as his opinion that, now his respected client would have about him those he so sincerely esteemed, permanent restoration to health might be fairly calculated upon.

The prognostics of the lawyer as to Seyvret's speedy recovery were not realized. Henrique, Julie, and his beloved boy constantly near him, he yet continued to decline rapidly. His nephew dreaded rather than sought a confidential communication respecting the extraordinary disappearance off the Cape; though, the more Henrique's thoughts dwelt on the subject, the more possible did it seem that, in spite of the attendant mysterious circumstances, natural causes might satisfactorily account for much that had occurred. His anxious desire not to induce the retrospection of a scene, during the excitement of which his unhappy relative's mental powers had evidently toppled

on the verge of insanity, completely mastered the young planter's curiosity ; and, well pleased to observe that Mons. Seyvret's mind was for the present moderately tranquil, he desired not to disturb its serenity. The sick man appeared to consider his dissolution approaching, and made all necessary arrangements for the disposal of his earthly possessions. He willed to Julie and Henrique Lemoine the estate in the Mauritius ; and, in trust for the little Henrique, a large property in France. His bequests were liberal to religious and charitable institutions, and in all he did he evinced a sound judgment.

The elder Madame Lemoine, who was one of the Sisters of Charity in a neighbouring convent of that order, had taken up her residence with her brother. Much to the annoyance of the priesthood, this holy woman was Mons. Seyvret's chief spiritual comforter, though he readily participated in the rites of the

Church of Rome, and all its enjoined duties, except confession.

A zealous monk belonging to the monastery of St. Augustine, had sought on one occasion, when the sufferer appeared even more than usually depressed, by a vivid description of purgatorial torment, to direct, in what he considered its proper channel, the wealth of which his brotherhood had been deprived by Seyvret's instrumentality. Firmly, but mildly, the sick man refused to make further provision for the monastery than he had already bequeathed; and, dismissing the disappointed priest, he required that his nephew should come to him.

"Henrique," said the planter, "I would be alone with you: let all others leave the room."

This request was obeyed, and Henrique drew near to his uncle's bed.

"Should I die to-night," deliberately commenced Seyvret, "you will find that I have provided for your dear son according to my

original intention when we left the Mauritius. The holy father who has just left us failed in his purpose: he would have persuaded me that the abbé's possessions should be appropriated to masses for the repose of my soul: its purgatory, as thou knowest, was endured off that Cape of Storms."

The planter paused, and then, looking inquiringly into his nephew's face, said calmly, "Do you remember?"

The question made Henrique start.

"I can never forget what you refer to, sir," replied he, fully expecting that his uncle was about to admit him into his long delayed confidence; "but do not speak of such matters now; wait till you feel stronger. You must not talk of dying yet; the physician assures me that disease you have none, and this gradual sinking of system is most unaccountable to him."

"It is not unaccountable to *me*," said the sick man solemnly; "I understand my own

case, Henrique. If I live through this night,—the anniversary of my unholy compact with the powers of hell,—then shall I leave my bed again, walk among you once more, and the evening of my stormy days may set in peace. Be not alarmed: it distresses me to see that I am often regarded by you as one whose sanity is not to be depended on. I ask not for excuses,” continued he, perceiving that his nephew was about to speak; “but listen to me.—Whether I am under a mental delusion or not, there was reality in my sufferings. When I rushed on the deck of the Triton, I was pursuing a phantom: it was the spirit of Jacopo. *You* saw it not, though it passed you closer than the curtain which now hangs beside you: it was real to *my* eyes as yonder orb of day.”

The departing rays of the setting sun were stealing into the chamber of the sufferer: he pointed to the luminary sinking beyond the distant horizon, regardless of Henrique's agitation.

“The spirit was impalpable; it broke in gliding by you, and reunited even as the stream of light that trembled on you but now. That phantom passed into the boat where Jumbo’s body lay,—I followed it: the skies were lit up with flames; the waters rose like some dread monster, and drew us into the foamy yeast of the mad wave;—I was delivered over to the service of the evil one!—The storm ship was before me!—The dead arose to life!—Jumbo sat there; his leaden eyes fixed on me, as, labouring at the oars, he propelled the boat; while at its bows the form of Jacopo stood;—one arm outstretched, he pointed to the floating hell that bore down on us.”

Seyvret fell back on his bed in a state of exhaustion. Henrique moistened the sufferer’s lips with wine, and attempted to dispute the supernatural portion of the painful story.

“Forgive me, my dear uncle, if I say that the more appalling horrors of the scene existed but in an over-excited mind. You re-

ceived a blow in falling with the boat, and delirium ensued : a wound was on your temple when you were picked up by the English ship."

"Nephew," replied Seyvret to this remonstrance, "I told you but an instant ago that, by whatever fantasies of hell I was surrounded, my agonies were real. Place that pillow behind me, and interrupt me not again. Tomorrow, when my last words may be in the sea of voices that murmur of the past, thou wilt not forget my words, Henrique."

The young man pressed his unhappy relative's hand in silence, who thus continued :

"I say not that I am certain of dying;—if this night leaves me a breathing being, the revelation of that hell-bark may have been false, and all might have been but a dream. We neared the storm-ship, — the lightning ceased, — the skies, the seas were dark, but, faintly illuming the waters around her hull, a phosphoric light played ; and oh ! what

timbers were there. The slime of rottenness clung to them ;—the ocean-worm had bored a myriad holes where the polypi made their home,—but they festered as they clung, The sea-snake had hung the masts with a still-born brood ;—the rigging was twined and knotted with corruption. On she came—that bark of the watery grave ;—her bows arched above us, distilling putrefaction ! Swollen faces, as of drowned men, looked down on me with sunken eyes ;—comrades whom the deep had long held were there ;—they beckoned me. A loud hail rose from that deck of death ;—involuntarily I uttered my name ; one crash, and the ship engulfed us : a shrill cry rang in my ears as I sank beneath the waters, —‘The night of thy vow be the night of thy doom !’—I remember no more till I was on board the British ship. The last hour of the year 1710,—now twenty years ago,—witnessed this vow : to-morrow will be new year’s day.”

Here ended the planter's strange recital. Henrique and his mother passed the night with Seyvret,—that night which the sufferer believed he should never survive. By a pious fraud, an opiate was administered ; and he awoke not till the blaze of day welcomed him to the morn of a new year. A rapid convalescence commenced from that hour. Mons. Seyvret lived to a good old age in the enjoyment of health and tranquillity, with the distressing exception that the end of each year was always marked by mental excitement nearly approaching to insanity. In one of these paroxysms he ultimately died ;—but he had seen the boy of his heart's adoption grown to man's estate ; and he departed the world honoured and regretted, the old Madame Lemoine and her son being the sole confidants of his extraordinary story. Henrique and Julie, who had been unremitting in affectionate care of their beloved relative, attended his obsequies, surrounded by a goodly family. In

the course of time many of their race passed "the Cape of Storms," but we find it not on record that the storm-ship appeared to them. It is believed that she never rides but on the troubled sea of an evil conscience.

the course of time many of their more valued
"the Circle of Friends" but we find it has no
round that the strong ship appeared to them
It is believed that the first service had for the
troubled soul of an old man.

V A T A, THE LEVELLER OF ALTARS.

WATTS

THE LEVELLER OF ALTARS

"And thou shalt love the Lord we worship, and
will not serve him, N. F. A.
"I deny nothing of the power of the
solitary God—we do believe in error. The
sacred songs tell of the power that from night
brought forth the glories of creation: again,
the mythology ascribes the attributes of wis-
dom, not to this wordless Creator, but to
another, less in might, and subjected to De-
ity, though every manifestation of the mind
declares the strong intellect shall rule the
weaker. Thus, had a God of the earth, bless-
ed on the labourer's toil,—the Deity who reigns in
yonder Heaven, cannot be he who dwells with-

VATA,

THE LEVELLER OF ALTARS.

“AND thou deniest the God we worship, and will not serve him, Vata !”

“ I deny nothing, father : but speak not of a solitary God,—ye do believe in many. Thy sacred songs tell of the Power that from night brought forth the glories of creation : again, thy mythology ascribes the attribute of wisdom, not to this wondrous Creator, but unto another, less in might, and subjected to Deu Tatt, though every manifestation of the mind declares the strong in intellect shall rule the weaker. Thou hast a God of the earth, blessing the labourer’s toil,—the Deity who reigns in yonder Heaven, cannot be he who dwells with-

in thy sacred groves,—the tangible, the idol wrought of hands, is not the God of essence. If there be a God that rules this earth, he is omnipotent, and rules alone: but thou dost add God to God. Each oak that bears the mystic misletoe thou dost make a demi-god. I deny nothing, father, but I doubt.” Thus spoke the youthful Vata to the Druid Maelfryddin, and that ancient man bowed his hoary head on his broad chest in silence. Vata was the son of Vatalac, a Druid of the Vacerri, who, ere he died, commended to Maelfryddin’s care the daring and presumptuous boy. “Let him learn the traditions of our mysteries, let him serve in the holy groves, and in the fulness of time grasp the golden sickle, even as by this hand it hath been grasped.” Thus saying, had the old man died;—and Vata sat at the feet of Maelfryddin a listener, but not a disciple.

“At my bidding the horns of the white bull are bound to the oak, the altar of stone bears the kindled sacrifice. I read the wreathed and

knotted entrails as a book ; I am an elder among Druids, and kings bow down when I speak : yet before me, even me, hast thou blasphemed the gods of our groves and of our temples. Tremble, Vata, thou unworthy son of Vatalac ! tremble, lest I proclaim thy crime. 'The burning of a blasphemer is as incense to the gods ; but thou art young, and thine eager spirit would wrestle with our mysteries. The learning that would satisfy thy longing soul, could not be thine didst thou ponder over the sacred songs night by night, till thy golden head was silvered, thy beard in growth below thy girdle, and thine hand so palsied that thou couldst not grasp the sacrificial knife. But thine hair is light, in the glories of youth, thy beard yet crisply curled around thy chin. Vata, thou lovest my daughter, the blue-eyed Mona ;—for her sake, and for the memory of other days when thy sire was to me as a brother, I will forget the words mine ear hath heard ;"—and Maelfryddin, who had thus broken

the chain of silence which the bold questioning of the youth had cast over his spirit, chanted a song of the sacrifice, after the manner of the Saronidæ when instructing a disciple, that Vata might not again seize occasion to anger the Deity, or rather Deities,—for druidical worship was a strange mingling of deism with polytheism,—and vex the ear of their minister by his presumptuous doubts and cavillings.

“ The temple is of unhewn stone ;—
Sacred are the hands that wrought
The house of our God.
Giant pillars point to the clouds ;—
The blue vault of heaven
Is the dome of his habitation :
He descends from the skies
When the sacrifice is slain.

“ Is it the death of many oxen—
Is it the cry of his enemies
When they burn for their crimes,
That brings him to his altar
Where the Faids and Bardi stand ?
Let us read the intestines of the victims ;—
Deu Tatt loves obedience :
These are the rites of his worship,—
Thus is the sacrifice slain.”

When the Druid had finished this wild chant,—one of the many traditional songs by which the mysteries of druidism had been handed down from the earliest generations of men,—Vata would have again disputed with him; but Maelfryddin, rising from his seat, pointed with his finger to the roof of the abode which had witnessed this colloquy; and the youth, doubting and presumptuous as was his nature, felt for the moment subdued by the bright beam of that old man's eye.

“Speak, Vata, speak! He listens.—Boy! boy! art thou daunted for once in thy bold career of cavilling? Fear and be wise. Mysteries, the truths of which have been confirmed by myriads of nights, which sages have learnt from the mouths of sages since the world rose from the sea of darkness, may not be doubted by the uninitiated.”

Vata answered not;—if the holy office of the bearded Druid did not over-awe him, that natural reverence for age, which in the early

times approached almost to the worship of the full of days, for the moment silenced him. He passed from the dwelling of Maelfryddin, which was situated in the wilds of Cernyw, — the Western land of ancient Britain, — not a single doubt solved of the many which perplexed him. He disputed the authority of the Druids; he spurned the trammels of their ceremonials; — if he believed in a First Cause, he looked upon this great source of all created matter, as a power too high to meddle with the finite ways of man; — as a deity who, never having revealed his will, could not demand obedience. If he believed in a God, we say, — for even here he doubted, — of two presumed facts alone had he persuaded his restless and inquiring mind; that a power invisible was insulted by the worship of the visible god of wood or stone, — and asked not the intervention of man with man; — consequently religion, as taught by priestcraft, was a juggle; consecrated temples, altars,

plains, and groves, abominations unto nature, and, if such there were, to nature's God.

The blue-eyed Mona sat in her bower-like dwelling;—she was weeping. Her head rested on her folded arms, and her long hair, falling over those rounded limbs of marble whiteness, hid the lovely features of the British maiden. An almost giant form stood before her: a youth, whose athletic frame rose to a height far above the standard of his compatriots. 'There was a fearful beauty in his restless eye and lofty brow; the transverse furrows of his habitual frown, the curl of his expressive lip, told the busy workings of pride in a mind that owned not mortal or immortal control. It was Vata,—but Mona looked not up: deeply pondering of her beloved, she knew not that his breath was almost on her cheek as he leant over her, his fiery glance subdued into a fond but melancholy regard of the unconscious girl.

“Mona, dost thou sleep?—what! is my beloved in tears?”

The maiden looked up at the sound of her lover's voice, and a sunny smile chased the mists of sorrow from her face.

“Thou hast been with my father. The meetings of Vata and Maelfryddin bring anger and regret to those who should ever be in the bonds of amity. My sire mourns thy bold and impious questioning of sacred mysteries; he dreads that thou wilt call a ban most terrible—the imprecation of his holy order—on thine head. Thou, Vata, hast bitter thoughts towards the sire of thy Mona, and art ready to war with all mankind; ay, even unto me thou art stern: but this once I have wronged thee.—Thou art—no, no! thou wert—Ah, me! what have I said, that while I would have thanked thee for that look of love, it flees, and thou dost frown on me. My father hath incensed thee; yet he but seeks to bring thee to the belief our race hath held from generation to

generation since the birth of time. Vata, why seek to pierce the mysteries of the Druids, if thou canst not place thy faith in what thou learnest?"

"Mona," solemnly replied the young Briton, "thou dost not regard *thy* sire—the ancient Maelfryddin—with a veneration deeper than the love, the sorrow-chastened love, with which I treasure the memory of *mine*. When Vatalac died, he bade me sit at Maelfryddin's feet, and learn the sacred songs of initiation. His desire was, that I too should be a Druid. I have learnt, and learning have confuted and despised,—not thy honoured parent, dearest Mona,—but the lies, the whole machinery of monstrous lies, holding him captive. Yes; he is sincere and zealous in a vain belief; if there are those belonging to his order who seek to compromise the rights of human nature,—who disbelieve the gods they bid us serve,—Mona, thy sire is guiltless of the fraud. An ancient of the Druids, he regards himself a chosen

minister of the powers of Heaven; but cheer thee, my beloved; let not thy gentle spirit be troubled; I parted not in anger with Mael-fryddin. There was so much of majesty in his form, as pointing upwards he would fain have called his gods to witness my denial of their deific being, that I almost forgot the fallacy of the worship in reverence for its minister. In silence I left him, and have come to thee."

"Doth, then, my sire consent to my being thine, and thine alone? The ruthless custom of our people, which assigns a woman unto many men, rather than to one before whom her heart in earthly worship bows, affrights me."

"Maelfryddin consents, my Mona: thou art to be mine; no other can dare claim thee. The people who believe in many gods, who think a score of deities may divide the soul, are but consistent when they would make love, that natural religion of the heart, bow down at many shrines: but we will show them, dearest,

how pure that passion is which burns but for one alone. The moon knows but one love; she watches while the day-god sleeps, and when he rises, her soft radiance melts in his embrace. What are the stars to her; she looks them into nothingness. Thou shalt be my moon, dear Mona,—I thy sun. We wait but till to-morrow's noon hath passed. Carbelan, who would have claimed thee for himself,—ay, not for himself alone, but for his kindred,—questions my right to the dwelling I have prepared for thee, and appeals unto the Druids. His land-marks border upon mine; but is it just, when I have made the abode of our promised joys all that should win my Mona from her own sweet bower, that *now* he talks of land-marks? Why not have stayed the busy preparation of my hand in fashioning our home? I had already pictured to my soul thy smile, thy thanks, the gentle recompence of all my care. How sweet to bring thee to thy future resting place, and when thine eye

has beamed with joy to see a realm of beauty shining round, sink in thy fond embrace, and bid thee reign the queen of all thy Vata's toil hath wrought ! I *will* not yield it now. 'Twas I reclaimed the wilderness, and I will hold possession."

" Oh ! say not so, my Vata," responded the maiden ; " if my sire and his sacred order think thy cause is just, thy right will be awarded thee ;—but should they give our fair home to another, let not not thine ire stir up the dark spirit that doth often times affright me ; thou art not then my Vata. Come to me ere wrath hath time to change thee. Come on the instant thou dost hear their sentence ; I will be thine, Vata,—this our bower,—all other homes forgotten in each other's arms."

" On my fair claim to hold that which this hand hath made of value to dispute, I depend, Mona. The fathers are ancient men, and will do justice. As ministers of imagined deities I dispute their interference ; but did they not

assert this idle privilege of giving judgment on grounds of priestcraft,—Carbelan having refused the appeal to arms,—I would not care to search out fairer umpires. To-day is the sixth of the moon;—already have the eager worshippers of Deu Tatt, and his tribe of gods, gone forth to seek the misletoe. To-morrow the new-born deity will be adored, cut down amid a shouting multitude, hailing this off-shoot of the oak a grave mediciner of soul and body. Then will the Druids pronounce their verdict. Now, dearest Mona, we will speak of love.”

“ Would thou didst only think of love and of thy Mona, Vata. Forbear this questioning of sacred rites. My father’s fondness for his daughter hath made him yield unto our wishes; still he dreads to give me to thee, lest one day thou callest on thy head the Druids’ ban, and be cast forth a wanderer. There,—look not so grave;—thou shalt not answer me. To-morrow I shall be thine for ever. Say not angry words, and I will sing to thee.”

Vata smiled in silent obedience on the fair girl who thus schooled him ; and half resting in his arms, she sang in measured cadence the love song of Mona, the British maid.

Brave is Vata, the son of the Druid ;
He hath slain many in fight ;—
But his eye, fierce as lightning,
When the foe is before him,
Gleams like the star of evening
When he looks upon Mona,
His beloved.

Sad is Mona, the maid of Carnyw,
When the foemen are in battle,
Lest the voice of her Vata
Swell the cry of the dying !
And he who hath gone forth in strength,
Comes not back.
Listen, Hesus, to the sighing of Mona.
Let thy shield go before him,
Her beloved !

Glory to Hesus ! the prayer hath been answered.
The sunbeam of war
Is the moon of Mona's bower ;—
Her head is on that bosom,
Thy shield, O Hesus ! guarded :

The arms are around her
That wrestled with the battle.
Sweet are the words that comfort
The beloved.

The Grove of Cynmer crowned the Hill of Morven. There flourished a thousand trees;—but one was the father of the grove. Flinging abroad a myriad of leafy arms, and spreading deep in the ground as many fibrous roots, the trunk of the giant oak proudly stood as though it would have grasped earth and air. It grew a short distance apart from the crowd of trees, which appeared in attendance upon their great progenitor, and by a brighter foliage relieved the dark shadow of that ancient of ages. Beneath a lower branch, which stretched abruptly from the embrowned trunk, a light green bough,—green to the very stalk, and hung with beads of pearly white,—showed that the patriarch of the grove had added to the reverence awarded in right of years, by once again bearing the sacred misletoe.

A multitude of eager worshippers at the base of the mount, looked up with arms upheld ; their half-clad forms bent forward, as though they waited but an expected signal to break the barrier of restraint that kept them from rushing towards the object of their superstitious worship. An assemblage of Druids, clothed in robes of white, which looked of dazzling purity in the rays of the bright autumn sun, stood immediately before the oak, several of these supporting on their extended arms the majestic form of the ancient Maelfryddin. His flowing drapery, of the same spotless hue as the attendant Druids, gradually unfolded as he ascended the tree, till, when the sacred branch was beneath the crescent of the golden sickle with which he was armed, his garment having unrolled to the earth, he appeared to have assumed a supernatural stature. Two milk-white bulls, their strong necks wreathed with flowers, completed the group. These, tied by the horns, and pinned

to the earth, with loud bellowings awaited sacrifice. The misletoe fell beneath the stroke of Maelfryddin, who received it in his robe; and the multitude, rushing upwards till within a few yards of the oak, now encompassed the scene of immediate interest.

The Druid had descended, and the bulls were slain. The sacred bough was fastened on a branch of the oak; and beneath this holy symbol Maelfryddin sat, supported on either hand by Saronidæ, Bardi, and Faids,—three orders of priesthood,—while a single bard stood forth and called aloud,—

“Let the children approach the father. Let the cry of the injured come before the Druid Maelfryddin. Let the wrong-doer tremble, for the entrails of the slain bull will tell the deeds of the man of blood. Maelfryddin, an elder of the Druids, sits to do justice; Saronidæ, Bardi, and Faids are around him.—Woe, woe, woe to the man that despiseth their counsel!”

This solemn form having been repeated thrice, with a short pause between each repetition, Carbelan stood forth, and in few words claimed the dwelling of Vata; for the glen in question, though uncultivated and unoccupied by him or his father, had been held in possession by his grandsire.

“And what says Vata, the son of Vatalac, to the charge of taking that which belongeth to another, and of keeping with the strong hand a glen which the lord thereof hath warned thee to resign?”

Thus addressed by the Druid Maelfryddin, Vata impatiently sprang from amid the crowd, and reared his tall form to its extreme altitude as he exclaimed,—

“I am not a robber!—Who layeth this to my charge? I hold but that which I have made mine own by culture. My rocky home was the lair of the wolves that I have slain;—the once-tangled thicket is now a goodly

grove: where the weed was rank, the flower is blooming; and the green slime has passed from the pool where the stag can now see his antlers as he drinks. I have offered the gage of battle to Carbelan;—why doth he appeal to the Druids?”

“Vata,” answered Maelfryddin, “the landmark of Carbelan is on the right and on the left of the glen which thou hast taken. Thou dost not deny that it was held by the sire of thy neighbour. Thou art cast forth from the glen of Cassemar, and thy home must be made on the land which is thine.”

“There is not wisdom in the words of Maelfryddin,” exclaimed the indignant Vata, while an audible murmur ran through that vast assembly. The elder of the Druids was for a moment silenced by the audacity of the speaker.—“I deny the justice of the award. Why should Carbelan claim that which Carbelan cared not to enjoy? I deny

the power of our judges !—they are but men our superstitions have made sacred. I deny the gods they serve !”

“ Hear him !” cried Maelfryddin, rising from his seat of turf, and with outstretched arms taking a single pace towards the daring offender, — “ hear him, Saronidæ, Bardi, and Faids ! — hear him, sons of Cernyw ! He despises our authority—denies our gods !”

The attendant priesthood again gathered on the right and left of their superior, ready to pronounce a loud response in the litany of malediction which now commenced. “ Let him go forth !”

At the voice of Maelfryddin the crowd divided in the centre, and Vata, looking scornfully around him, with measured tread passed through the astounded multitude.

“ Death is not for so great an offender ;—let him live to curse life, as now I curse him.”

The assembled Druids here took up the ban of their chief priest in one voice, exclaiming,

“Curse him!”—“Deu Tatt will avenge himself, and curse him!”—“Curse him!”—“The Father of Night shall curse him!”—“Curse him!”—“The gods of our groves and our temples, curse him!”—“Curse him!”

“In the groves and in the temples will I visit ye,” cried Vata, “suddenly turning on his persecutors. Many hands were now stretched out to seize him, and but for the authoritative command of Maelfrydden, which rose even above the yell of the infuriated people, the crowd would have closed on the presumptuous youth.

“Let him go forth, let him go forth!—he is not thine; he belongs to the curse we have pronounced upon him. Deu Tatt will visit him. Let no man shelter him! Let no man touch him!—he is an accursed thing in the sight of the gods.”

At this moment a single cry arose from the silenced multitude, and Mona, heeding not the interdict which had been pronounced, even ex-

cited to the manifestation of her affection for Vata by the ban which bade friends, lovers, and kindred, forsake him, rushed towards the bold offender, and would have thrown herself into his arms, had she not been rescued from the imagined pollution by the Druids, who, at her father's command, bore her from the mount. Meanwhile Vata passed onward, after having given expression to his threat of retribution on the groves and altars of the priesthood, whose authority he defied. He heard the cry of Mona, but he looked not in the direction whence the sound proceeded, lest he might be unnerved by her grief, and afford a triumph to his enemies. The crowd continued to gaze after the desperate man, till his tall form was lost in a hollow of the road he was pursuing; and the voices of the Faids called their attention to the rite of divination which now commenced on the intestines of the sacrifice. To tell of the fair promise of seed-time and harvest; of victory in war, and abundance in peace, with

which the priests sought to divert the minds of the people from dwelling on the indignity which had been offered to Druidical worship, belongs not to our story. The reluctance of Maelfryddin to order the death of Vata,—the son of an ancient friend,—one who had been committed to his guardianship,—who, though an unworthy disciple, was a brave and generous youth, and the beloved of Mona, had saved the daring blasphemer of the gods from the destruction he had tempted.

The sun went down on the hill of Morven : darkness was on all around. The sky was moonless, and the mists of earth arose in dense vapour. The night grew on, and star by star, the radiance of Heaven shone out, as though the veil of ether could not hide the glories of a sanctuary of light. A female form approached;—she looked carefully around, and then disappeared amid the trees. The light branches closed over the daring intruder, who had passed

where the uninitiated foot had never before trodden,—within the living temple of the Druids, the grove of their idolatry. It was Mona. She knew not where to meet Vata. He came not to her bower : she dreaded that in his anger he had forgotten her. Then Mona be-
thought her of his wild threat against the sacred places of his persecutors ; and she sought him even on the mount which had witnessed the ban that had made him an outcast and a wanderer on the face of the earth, whom no man might succour, or woman love.

Slowly and silently the full moon rose, and the stars melted in her beaming ray ; even the deep blue of heaven was silvered o'er with light. Ever and anon Mona looked out from her concealment, but she beheld not Vata. Why did her beloved linger ? or where now was she to seek him ? Had he abandoned Cernyw, and not bade farewell to Mona ?

Vata stood on Cairn Caer ! Rock surmounting rock, in rugged masses of grey moor-stone, encompassed him. One mighty pile, which gave a name to the wild scene, rose high above all that “giant gathering” of Nature’s hand ; its towering altitude crowned by a ponderous stone of rotund form, and curiously poised : this rock-born instrument of the Druidical ceremonies was a question-altar, the majestic crags around a temple dedicated to the Moon, that lambent emblem of purity. Brightly she now shone above her declared sanctuary, as if mindless that the ministers of her mysteries lied unto her worshippers. Mighty was the shadow cast by the ordeal stone ; but white and glistening was the surface which it presented to the mild orb of Heaven,—the eye of truth revealed,—save in one solitary spot. The sacrificial basin hollowed in the rock bore the dark stain of clotted blood. There had the life stream flowed, red from the victim’s veins, and formed a pool of divination over which the

ancient Faïd bowed with muttered incantation, till his thrilling cry, resounded by the myriad voices of an assembled multitude, declared the moment for the ordeal. Then would the ponderous mass, yielding to the touch, give back the accused of man to the rights of fellowship, his cause espoused of God ;—or the poor wretch, foredoomed, with sinews wrung and ruptured by distention, would wrestle with his destiny ;—but, lo ! motionless it stands, as though rock had grown to rock.

The hand of Vata was on the question-altar. He was alone. Came the bold questioner to put to test the efficacy of priestly intervention ? Came he, the uninitiated, to brave the mysteries of the temple, when the power that claimed its worship hovered there, as if descending from the realm of space, journeying through the brightness of Heaven to visit an earthly throne ? The stern features of the daring youth, in rigid beauty, were upturned towards the Moon ; his knee pressed against the rock. “ Now be the

question of thy divinity," he exclaimed; "I call on thee to answer: Art thou a god, or art thou but an emanation of that glorious whole, filling the Heavens with sparks of golden fire? The Sun, thy fellow worshipper, not thy fellow deity; the growth of one great cause, not Deu Tatt, Jupiter, or Jove, but Nature, ever existent Nature,—coeval with eternity." Vata's giant frame bowed towards the stone, as though with one mighty effort he purposed casting the huge mass into the depths below, and dash it in fragments on the rugged flooring of that rock-built temple.

"Ah! it yields not!—Is there then a god, and is yon sphere of light its heavenly habitation? No, no! I see it now,—'tis priestcraft—jugglery." Thus saying, he loosed his hold on the immoveable question-altar; his quick ear had caught a sound of crushing granite:—with a single glance he perceived an opposing wedge-like fragment,—the key-stone of the Druids' mystery,—and raised it from its cunningly

contrived bed. Again he bore against the ordeal,—it rocked. With triumphant laugh, startling the silence of the midnight hour, he hailed his bold success, and flung his arms abroad. “Where is thy godhead now? Thy altar is a cheat, thy temple desecrated! Behold, behold!” Once more he dashed his iron palms against the stone;—its vibration increased in violence. Now it bowed towards him, as if threatening to crush the daring violator of the Druidical sanctuary; now toppling over its rugged pedestal, and again rolling back, grinding with every movement the narrow ledges which circumscribed its movement.

“There is no God but Nature,” shouted forth the wild questioner of holy mysteries, and with one tremendous bound the rock rolled from its ancient seat, crushing opposing crags, and falling from ledge to ledge, it boomed down,—and Vata stood on the cairn it had occupied; the frenzied excitement of the moment past,—

astounded, if not appalled, at the work he had achieved.

A gathering of black clouds hovered over the mount of Morven;—had the Queen of Night fled the Heavens, startled at the desecration of her temple? Nor star nor moon was *there*.—All was dark, and a rising wind swept the trees, scattering the first leaves of autumn. Now a bright flame shot into the air—another, and another, from each angle of the sacred grove, bursting forth like fiery messengers of wrath, waves over the devoted sanctuary:—the summer heat has prepared the branches for the burning; the breeze fans the growing flame kindled by the hand of Vata. He stands by the ancient oak, the patriarch of the grove.—A brand is in his hand,—he thrusts it in a hollow of the mighty trunk. He gathers the dry leaves — he blows the crackling fire—it blazes up; and while the heart of the giant

tree glows with red heat, he flings burning torches of riven pine amid its branches. The sound of many voices and of coming feet is on the mount. Vata flees not. He pursues the work of destruction. The grove is wrapped in flame, and the Druids who had committed their leafy temple to the protection of Night, now behold it as a beacon on a hill. They rush towards the burning trees, and Mael-fryddin's hand is on the shoulder of Vata. "This is thy work, thou son of wrath," in accents of thunder, exclaimed the ancient man. Had the voice of the Druid power to appal the destroyer of sacred things? He trembled—fearful is the trembling of the strong man—his knees shook, he gazed wildly on the fire he had kindled:—what cry was *there*? Mingling with Maelfryddin's solemn tones came the shriek of Mona to the ear of Vata. She had watched for him;—she had slumbered,—and the flames of his vengeance were around her.

Vata was in the cave of Gwithmar, and a stone was before the mouth of that cave. He lay on the sharp granite fragments that floored his prison. He felt not their pressure on his almost naked form, though they ground into his flesh. He was condemned to be burnt in the great sacrifice of the Druids, when the hearths of the people would be lighted by the sacred fire; and but a few days were wanting of the appointed time.

The last night of autumn was near, when the charred embers would be religiously ground to dust beneath each roof-tree, and scattered forth on the morrow of that night: then would each worshipper bring tribute to the Druids, and receive a brand from the burning sacrifice, that their hearths might be kindled with holy fire, and the blessing of their priesthood rest on them. Many were the victims to be slain, and who so acceptable to the gods as Vata? The thoughts of the doomed man were not of the torments of the *coming*

flames, but of the flames that had passed. As he rolled on his stony couch, night following day, and day treading upon the shades of night, he counted not the hours that remained to him of life: on the sixth night of that moon had been *his* sacrifice. He had burnt the grove of the gods—he had mocked a deity in its very temple. He had overthrown the ordeal that had dispensed guilt or innocence, life or death, for ages;—and as Vata pondered these things, he sprang on his feet, and lifted his chained hands to the roof of his prison, cursing in his frantic rage the gods of the Druids;—but, ah! they had been avenged. Mona, the gentle, the loving Mona, was the victim offered on the shrine of his impiety. He had defied the gods—he had neglected their sacrifices—and, behold! with his own hand had he lit the pile, where the cheek he had often pillowed on his bosom should scorch as a scroll;—the eye distend in agony, that had ever rested on him in the melting fulness of

love ;—the heart, within which was garnered for him the first fruit of affection, burst in the throes of death ;—and the voice, which ever tuned the discord of his nature unto melody, in the screams of dissolution declare the completion of the sacrifice.

“ Gods of the Druids, ye are avenged !” Vata yelled in the extremity of his despair, and dashed his chains against his brow, till the hot tears of passion were swollen by the bubbling springs of life.

The stone was rolled from the mouth of the cave of Gwithmar, and Maelfryddin stood before Vata.

“ Dost thou then confess the gods of the Druids ?” said the ancient of days to the wayward disciple who had sat at his feet, and learnt the songs of the groves and the altars but to cavil and laugh them to scorn.

“ I know not thy gods, old man,” answered the captive ; “ if I cried unto them in mine

agony, who shall say that Vata, the leveller of altars, cried unto them for mercy? If they be gods, they are of the powers of evil, and evil have they brought unto me. Till I pondered on their mysteries, my heart was at peace within itself;—I worshipped as I was taught,—wronged no man;—and who shall say that Vata, the son of Vatalac, was not brave in the fight? My father died, and I, the offspring of a Druid by the fair minister to his pleasures,—thy Druidesses wear not the “holy chain” in subservience to the gods alone, but to bind their priests in the lusts of the flesh,—was sent to thee that I might become of thine order. Thou knowest what thou hast taught me. Would that I had learnt less, or more—if more thou canst teach. Hast thou a mystery to bring life to ashes,—the hue of beauty to the blackened cheek, and the heart of love to the charred corse? Where hast thou laid my Mona?”

“Her urn is in the tomb of our race—none

know that I have broken the law which forbids the violator of our groves to receive the rite of burial. She was not a Druidess, nor wore she the chain of our mysteries; but she went to her own burning, and the sacrifice has been received. Last night, even last night, did I behold her, like a spirit of glory, in the blue ether of Heaven. Such was my vision, and I am come at her bidding to the cave of Gwithmar."

"Ancient of days!" replied Vata, "is it the Druid Maelfryddin I hear talk of spirits of glory rising from the dust of death? Is not Mona the white fawn of the herd in the meads of Tamar, or the lamb of the flock in the vale of Carwyn, or the dove that nestles to her mate in the grove of Cithara? Old man, thou hast forgotten that thou art a Druid, and talkest of things that thou teachest not, even to thy disciples."

"Disciples of the many nights know the secrets of the sanctuary, where truth sits in

her beauty unveiled ; but he who would learn all when on the threshold,—who despiseth the steps that lead to the temple,—who would wrestle with mysteries rather than bow to instruction, may burn groves and overthrow altars, but Deu Tatt will not be revealed to him in the destruction of his habitations, and the outrage of his servants. Yet doth Mona plead for thee, and though I may not clear away the clouds of thy dark spirit, which wrap thee as a mantle in thy pride, still even thou, the slayer of my child, — thou, the despiser of our gods, — thou, Vata, the leveller of altars, will I rescue from the flames of the sacrifice ; for the spirit of Mona pleads with Deu Datt, and I who seem to men the Druid of groves and altars, where *many* gods are worshipped, am the priest of mysteries where the Eternal Essence is as *one*.”

“ I have listened,” said the captive, “ and the hope of life to the heart of the condemned, is not more strange than thy words to mine

ear. But why should I believe in the Deud
Tatt of thy secret worship?—He who bids thee
lie unto his people is a liar in his sanctuary.
Cursed be the ——”

“Curser of an unknown God,” responded
Maelfryddin, solemnly interrupting the im-
precation of Vata. “The stone is moved
from the door of the cave, the watchers are
away; the barks of the dark men are on our
coast, and thou art friends with them. Go,
seek the deity thou findest not in our
god. The hot thirst of thy soul drieth
the calm waters of instruction; but like a
flood shall conviction come,—a flood where
the waves are flames.” Then Vata went
down to the ships of the Phœnicians, and
embarked on the seas which flowed towards
Carthage.

At even-tide came the watchers to look for
the captive, but he was gone,—and he who was
to have watched in their stead slumbered on
his post; but the sleep was the sleep of death.

Maelfryddin had died in the cave of Gwithmar.

Carthage was a land of blood, for Moloch was the god of the people. He had more worshippers than Cælestis, Jupiter, or Apollo,—more than the visible glories of Heaven, even the moon and the sun. But one god was the rival of Moloch in the hearts of the Carthaginians; all other gods were as nought compared with him, save the Great Serpent, whose temple was in the midst of the city. Vata had inquired of the priests of Moloch, and they told him of their rites: he turned away from the history of their bloody sacrifices—they were slayers of children, even as the Druids were slayers of men,—and he asked for the living God. Then did Mago, the merchant who had brought Vata to Carthage, being sick of an unknown disease, send others with him to the temple of the Great Serpent; a god who, according to the saying of his priests, existed

before the foundation of Carthage, and was worshipped in the land ere the Phœnicians possessed it for a heritage. And Vata reasoned with himself,—“ This is a living god, and people tell of his might, and say his power is beyond the strength of man : yet speaketh he with human voice, in the form of a mighty serpent, discoursing the wisdom born of that race before the great flood.”

The steps of the temple were overlaid with plates of brass, but they were worn by the feet of the devout ; and brazen pillars supported the brazen gates which admitted the Carthaginians to the temple of the god. It was in the form of a mighty rotunda, having a veil in the midst, which divided the worshippers from the sanctuary. Here the magi of the mysteries alone waited on the deity till the veil was withdrawn, and the monster god appeared unto his people.

Vata mingled with the crowd which watched for the moment of “ The Presence.” In the

temple was a multitude of many nations ; Carthaginians, Tyrians, citizens of Utica, and people of Numidia, even natives of Egypt and Ethiopia, waited to bow before the Great Snake that lived for ever amid the altars of brass on the shore of Carthage: the brazen serpent, the author and averter of evil, was a worship of all lands ; but this was a living god. Now came soft music to the ear of the attentive multitude, not the voice of harp or of dulcimer, of tabret or lute, but a blending of sweet sounds that belonged to each and every instrument of concord, yet seeming to proceed from one harmonious whole, that in itself breathed forth the soul of melody.

The openings in the dome of the temple, which had till now admitted the bright beams of the Afric sun, shut with a mighty clang ; and as if the day-god had concentrated his rays within the sanctuary, the veil appeared to melt away in a fervent blaze of glory. When the eye became accustomed to the dazzling splen-

dour which at first blinded by excess of brightness, a vast semi-circular hall became apparent, the ceiling of which was supported by pillars of brass: between these were altars of black marble, surmounted by huge brazen serpents twined in a variety of attitude, yet in each as if the reptile were about to strike its prey. Vivid flame shot up from dark shrines, the sombre hue of which,—and a sort of keeping in the general refulgence,—alone permitted Vata to remark these adjuncts of the scene. The centre of the sanctuary was occupied by a divan, spread with cloth of purple;—censers casting forth in pale clouds the most costly perfumes of the eastern world, stood around; and amid the almost frantic shouts of his worshippers,—drowning the loud swell of harmony that appeared to burst forth from the dome, the walls, even to rise from the marble flooring of the temple,—the monster god became revealed to his people. He was coiled in many a mighty fold, seeming to blend in one hideous mass the

dun and leprous frame from which arose, like the column of an aloe's giant bloom, the tall neck of the serpent, protruding its swollen bloated head and eye of fire—a fitting fruit for such a stem. A circlet of gold was on the reptile's blood-red crest, towards which his priests, two dark men of Africa, in scarlet robes, pointed with wands of ivory, as standing on either side the god, they thus seemed to remind his worshippers of their allegiance. After the first acclamations of the multitude subsided, and the unseen music had sunk to the dulcet sounds which had marked the commencement of the ceremonies, the priests waved their wands, and the spiral workings of the monster's body, the span of which, increasing to the centre, was that of a palm of many years' growth, became apparent. Costly were the offerings now laid on the brazen steps and balustrades of the sanctuary, where further approach was forbidden to the crowd by a gauze wire-work almost imperceptible, but of

great strength. Moreover, gathering round a wicket at the side of the temple near the serpent's shrine, Vata saw men and women presenting infants, which were received by one of the priests as an acceptable sacrifice to their god. It appeared no part of the ceremony to exhibit the dying throes of the innocents, crushed or devoured by the monster, though such a sight might have been pleasing in the eye of his worshippers. The living offerings were laid before the altars of the brazen serpents by the priest who received them, and with each appeared to be given a written question for the god to propound. This the other official took as his colleague passed him, and placed it on the divan of the Great Snake, who, bending his head to the scroll, uttered in harsh, grating tone, and ambiguous phrase, the required response,—whether inquiries of the life or death of sick relatives, the success of mercantile enterprise, or the discovery of crime. At length every brazen ser-

pent had one or more victims before it;—the rail of the sanctuary was laden with gifts;—and with the same loud clang which marked their closing, the shutters of the dome flew open, and the light of day descended. On the instant the impervious veil of the sanctuary fell across the temple, hiding in its ample folds the costly offerings of the people. Such was the serpent worship of the Carthaginians; and Vata, astounded by splendour,—which, compared with the simplicity of druidical rites, was as though a world of superhuman radiance had been suddenly opened to him,—resolved to offer himself as a disciple, ay, even as a candidate for the priesthood of the temple,—determined, if the superhuman power of the monster-god was but the jugglery of his ministers, to solve the mystery of the cheat, and daringly expose the authors of it to the indignation of the Carthaginians. At the same time he confessed to his own heart that he was utterly confounded at the speaking power of a wondrous

reptile, larger a hundredfold than the largest snake of Britain; who, according to the belief of his votaries, foretold events with a certainty scarcely laid claim to by the augurs of his native land; and who had been acknowledged and worshipped as a god for centuries by people of all tongues and nations.

Vata waited not long for the initiation he so ardently sought. It had been noised abroad that a native of Baratanac, one who had belonged to the magi of that island, had arrived at Carthage to seek the true God. It was necessary that the priests of the Great Serpent should be strangers in the city. Though the inferior ministers of the temple were numerous, but two high priests entered the sanctuary of the monster, and on the death of either of these, a successor was chosen by the survivor from among the few who were bold enough to be candidates for the office. The worship of the Great Serpent had been conducted for many years by two magi; one an Egyptian, assuming

to himself the name of Piromis,—the other an Ethiopian who was called Sual. They paid tribute to the state from the offerings to the god; and though the worship of the Great Serpent took many votaries from Moloch,—who was the chief god of the people,—still the “Sufetes” considered not their consular power abused by affording protection to so ancient a religion, and one so profitable to its guardians.

It happened when Vata applied to Piromis for permission to serve the monster god, this priest had been for some time contemplating the removal of his colleague, that he might constitute himself sole possessor of the immense treasure of the temple. This could only be effected by the death of Sual;—but it was necessary that his victim’s place should be supplied. Thus was Piromis well pleased at the offer of the stranger to take on himself the duties of the sanctuary, imagining that the opportunity had now arrived for ridding himself of a partner in the guardianship of the

god: an easy task did he conceive it to make the young Briton, by the terrors with which he could surround him, fulfil the office of high priest without his presuming such an equality with his initiator as to demand a share of the priestly emoluments, or more than might be safely communicated of the secrets of the sanctuary. Piromis, anxious to keep Vata from the sight of Sual, allowed him not to remain in the temple, but appointing the morrow for the commencement of his initiation, he gave his young disciple the pass-words by which he might be admitted within the sacred precincts, and avoiding the numerous questions which Vata was ready to propose, the arch-priest ended an interview, the result of which he contemplated not.

Vata sat at meat in the house of Mago the merchant of Carthage ;—but the soul of his host sickened at the sight of viands, even costly and delicate as those which formed the banquet

before him. Soft and luxurious were their couches, spread with the richest purple, and rarest skins from the vast stores of the Carthaginian, who anticipated in these early days the cushioned punicanî of the Romans ;—but Mago found not repose in downy pillows,—disease was at his heart ;—yet was not his guest to become a priest of the Great Serpent of whom he and his house were faithful worshippers, and would not the stranger to whom he had been as a brother, propitiate the god for the friend who had brought him to that land.

“ Vata,” said Mago, “ to-day thou wilt be one of the initiated in the temple of our deity. Forget not my sufferings—this agony has clung to me from the hour of my landing with thee on the shore of Carthage,—and did I not love thee well, I should perchance ascribe it to the anger of the Serpent for having brought thee here ; but thou wilt now serve him, and that which a wife has refused the husband of her bosom, thou wilt

achieve. Ask of the god that thy friend may live, and he will grant thy prayer. Thou shalt have many infants for the sacrifice, though the child that should have interceded for its father is withheld by the cruel Elisa."

"I am not what thou dost call me," exclaimed the wife of Mago, throwing herself at the feet of her lord; "it is thou who, in the madness of thine agony, dost forget thou art a father—I a mother."

Vata witnessed this scene in mute surprise; but he remembered the offering of the infants at the brazen shrines; and at length answered the Carthaginian merchant with that caution which the nature of the enterprise he had in hand required.

"Thy wife clings to thy feet, and thou talkest of a sacrifice being denied in the child that she has borne unto thee. Is the serpent god a Moloch that on his altars burn the children of his people?"

Mago raised his head: he had been sternly

contemplating the wretched mother, who continued sobbing on the ground.

“ When thou art a priest of the temple thou wilt know these things,” he gravely answered : “ I am but a worshipper. The infants received into the sanctuary never again go forth. At all hours of the day the faithful who seek the favour of our god take children to the brazen wicket wrapped in costly robes ; if such are the offspring of the bringer, then is the gift so acceptable, that but seldom is a prayer refused when thus accompanied. Each response of the Serpent to our questionings, during the ceremonial of his worship, is likewise to be sought by offerings such as I describe ; but these may be the children of our slaves, or purchased for the purpose of the holy rite. ’Tis said our god doth sustain himself on infants’ flesh ; but wherefore should I ask the nature of the sacrifice ? The Great Serpent saith, ‘ Let the mother bring the child to my gate, and I will grant her prayer, who

refuseth not her own offspring to the god she worships ! But Elisa has not the life of Mago at heart, or she would not lie at the feet of her husband, when the child might give health to the author of its being, and the wife prove that the love of woman is not only a thing of smiles and tears, but of action and endurance."

"Hold ! thou hast said enough," responded the Carthaginian woman, rising as she spoke. "Thou hast demanded a cruel proof of Elisa's love,—but I go. Oh ! could I but think this Serpent could aid thee, dreadful as is the sacrifice, I would not linger ; yet can the god that doth ask the infant of the mother, be a god of health,—a god of mercy ? No ! no ! no !" exclaimed the almost frantic creature ; "but still I go to seek my child, to give him as thy ransom, and to lose thee both."

Elisa rushed from the presence of her husband, who attempted not to stay her, so accustomed was the Carthaginian, in common

with his countrymen, to the idea of infant sacrifice; or perchance, the immediate danger which threatened in the disease he imagined was consuming him, had concentrated every feeling of the heart into one selfish lust of life.

Vata passed through the city towards the temple of the great snake;—deeply he pondered over the scene he had just witnessed. “That which lives by food cannot be a god,” he murmured to himself, as with rapid strides he made his way along the crowded streets and causeways of Carthage. “Mago is beside himself with this malady. Can the sacrifice of a wretched child to a soothsaying reptile, mighty though the monster be, and existent for endless ages, give health and life?” The mists gathered round the proud judgment of Vata were at once dispelled by these self-communings. With a heart sorely wounded by the death of Mona, and remembering with admiration the forgiveness of Maelfryddin for

all the evil he had wrought ; even treasuring as words of wondrous import the last saying of his ancient master, which spoke of one God who was alone worthy of worship ;—with his affections softened towards earth and Heaven, had Vata been subjected to the influence of a gorgeous and imposing ceremonial. He had, at the moment, yielded himself captive to the bewilderment of his senses ; but he was again free,—again the despiser of all the gods of men ; even doubting, if not utterly denying, that one mysterious power which was dimly shadowed forth at every altar reared by the visible to the invisible world.

Vata entered not the chief gates of the temple. He had received the pass-words from Piromis, and found admission through a small door which was opened at his bidding by dark men in scarlet robes, who gazed on him silently, and pointed onward. These belonged to the inferior ministers, one hundred of whom were attached to the service of the temple ;

their duties being regulated either by certain divisions of time, such as the stated periods for the public worship of the serpent, or by signals from the sanctuary, which was to them as much an abode of mystery as to the humblest votary who gazed on the splendid auxiliaries to devotion it was their office to supply. A dimly-lighted and tortuous passage, evidently of a gradual descent, but the direction of which, whether leading beneath the centre of the building, or making the circuit of its foundation, Vata could not discover, brought this daring inquirer into secret things to a gate which suddenly burst on his sight, glowing with fire as though each bar was of a red heat. A different pass-word to that which had admitted him into the temple was here required: gathering his robe around him, he gave the signal of initiation, and, with a sudden corruscation, the barrier disappeared. Startled, but not appalled, — for Vata was a stranger to fear, — he advanced and found him-

self at the extreme end of a vast and vaulted way, brilliantly lighted by brazen candelabra of snake-like form, each colossal reptile rising from its many coils into a column,—the attitude we have before described as assumed by the monster god,—and from the mouths of the serpents proceeded flames which caused the illumination.

Rising with a sudden ascent, this extraordinary vista was terminated by a door of massive bronze. The glowing barrier had closed behind Vata ;—not an attendant appeared to conduct his progress ;—and looking to the right and to the left, lest treachery might be intended him in that abode of priestcraft, he passed onward, the red tongues of flame seeming to dart, as with a living fire, from the hideous heads that protruded towards him. He reached the end of the avenue, and placed his hand on the fastening of the door, for he had no further pass-word wherewith to remove this new obstacle to his proceeding. The portal

opened not, and Vata stood for some minutes perplexed: he at length perceived a plate of metal suspended by a chain from the neck of the brazen serpent by his side. The use of such an instrument was familiar to him in the ceremonies of the Druids; and regarding not the hammer which appertained to it, he struck his heavy hand against the gong, and the mighty door before him flying back, as if actuated by the clang which sounded through the vaulted way, discovered to Vata a brazen gate, behind which a crimson drapery fell in rich folds. This curtain appeared to have been heedlessly drawn; an opening was in the centre, which showed Vata that, through an antichamber, he looked upon the sanctuary.

The glance of a single instant revealed, though yet in the distance, several of the altars; but these were dimly lighted, and the observer's attention became arrested by an object of predominant interest--the high priest Piromis. He had suddenly started back from

a yawning chasm, over which he must have been leaning when the sound of the gong met his ear. Vata, to his astonishment, beheld the priest make towards the gulf as if to cast himself headlong within it; but the ground had by some magic closed, and he now came onward till he reached the brazen gate, apparently unconscious that the eye of man was upon him. With hurried hand he tore open the curtain, and Vata stood before him.

“Thou art here ere I expected thee,” said Piromis, in deliberate accents,—the blood-shot orbs that glared beneath his beetling brows resting on the daring applicant for admission.

“The time of the ceremonial is yet distant; didst thou learn thy lesson now, thou wouldst forget it ere the veil was lifted.” Thus saying, he unbarred the portals, and Vata passed within the precincts of the sanctuary.

“What lesson wouldst thou have me learn,”

responded he, "that is so easily forgotten? and what portion of a ceremony which two only may perform, belongs unto a third?"

"Thou art the second priest of the Great Serpent," answered Piromis; "and as such must confront me when the god looks upon his people: then must thou receive the infant sacrifices;—my colleague hath gone to a distant land, and thou must fill his place."

Though Vata spoke not, he replied to the cold, inquiring gaze of the priest with a look of such stern suspicion, that Piromis wondered much he had not remarked the determined bearing of the candidate for initiation, ere he had so far committed himself as to admit this haughty stranger within the sanctuary. The monster god slumbered on his divan;—the feeble flames from the altars were faintly reflected by the brazen pillars;—the idol serpents, in the uncertain light, seemed instinct with life;—while Piromis and Vata stood regarding each other, like men who

knew not whether their eyes rested on friends or foes. A noise, as of a gathering multitude, was audible without the veil, and Vata at length broke silence.

“If I hear aright, the worshippers are assembling. I am not then before my time: explain the offices required of me.”

He looked at the serpent as he spoke;—the god had aroused himself. The huge circles of his vast frame slowly began to uncoil, and at the same moment a knocking, as on a metallic door, at first loud and rapid, then gradually sinking into silence, and again renewed, sounded at a little distance from the sanctuary.

“Hast thou the cause of the great god at heart?” exclaimed Piromis. “Listen to yonder appeal of some faithful worshipper, who brings the infant she has borne with pain and travail, who has hung on her bosom, perchance even her only child, to the deity she worships. No other but the bearer of

so acceptable a sacrifice may strike at the brazen wicket. Go, Vata, receive the offering;—let this be the test of thy obedience. Our great master fed, and his slumber past, ye shall sound the alarum for the ceremonies.”

The tall, athletic Egyptian, with much majesty, waved his ivory wand towards an opening to the right of the sanctuary, while the serpent, slowly rearing his crest, looked intently at Vata, and in the same guttural tones which had before astonished him in the oracular responses, reiterated the commands of the arch priest.

“Go and receive the offering!—obey!”

“I obey no man—no power either of good or evil,” answered the intrepid Briton; “but it suits me that I should protect yonder child;” and tearing his eyes from the fascination of the serpent’s gaze, he departed in the direction pointed out. This led him through a short passage to the brazen wicket, where the

wretched Carthaginian woman, Elisa, the wife of Mago, held her infant to her throbbing breast; hoping and yet dreading, each moment, that the door would open:—her hope, that the completion of her task might be hastened ere strength failed her, and she become unable to freely offer the child for its father's life;—her dread, that every caress of the infant was the last which might bless its distracted parent;—not a mother's bosom, but the burning altar, would be its pillow; and instead of a mother's arms around its tender frame, would be the twinings of the monster god.

Already had the bar fallen and the wicket opened, ere she perceived that a familiar face was before her; yet, was not Vata a priest of the sanctuary?—Did she hear aright?

“Home, home!” he whispered, in hurried but suppressed tones,—for many were the worshippers assembled.—“Bear the child hence. The sacrifice may not be accepted.

Go—go!—thy husband shall live; I, the priest of the temple, tell thee so.”

As he said this, the foot of Vata was on the threshold. He had lied in the name of the serpent: it was the last office he intended to perform in the sacred character. In another moment he would have mingled with the crowd, when a strong hand was laid upon his shoulder, another grasped the infant,—for the mother yet lingered in amazement: with a wild scream she yielded up her charge, and the wicket closed on Vata in the deadly grasp of Piromis. The child was thrown to the ground as the strong men wrestled with each other. The high priest was yet in the vigour of life, and the Briton, though of giant frame, found that his adversary was not to be treated as a despised foe. It was the object of Piromis to drag Vata back to the sanctuary; and he at length succeeded; but at the moment they reached the presence of the god, the Egyptian was

hurled to the earth with a force that jarred his panting frame. Vata was fast gaining the mastery over his enemy. Ah! the monster god is uncoiling its mighty folds. The combatants have for a moment separated—the serpent is between them—Piromis has risen and resumed his wand of ivory.

“Yield thou to the minister of my mysteries!”

They were the same tones in which the god had before spoken; but the cunning of the priest was not proof against the excitement of the moment. Vata perceived the voice to proceed from the mouth of Piromis, and triumphantly shouting,

“I mark thee, priest of a lying worship!” dashed past the serpent, and again is the desperate struggle renewed. This time the Egyptian has a fearful advantage. As Vata closes with his foe a sharp instrument pierces his breast;—it glances down his side, and he in vain attempts to seize the deadly weapon.

The priest escapes from his hold, and flees towards the altars. The Briton pursues him—the ground yawns at his feet—but he leaps the gulf that was to have entombed him. Again the hand of Piromis is raised to strike : Vata avoids the blow—his gripe is on the wrist of the priest—he disarms him, and, both toppling on the brink of the chasm, Vata plunges the dagger into the throat of Piromis. The noise as of the dragging of a weighty body along the ground has caused the victor to look up, but he yet holds the priest in his grasp ; the monster god is twining his huge coils around a mighty pillar ; his eye is on the staggering Piromis : Vata flings him forward ; the high priest attempts to speak to the once obedient monster ;—the blood gushes from his throat, and meets the forked tongue of his destroyer,—the jaws of the serpent are on his neck,—the deadly coils gather round him—each moment they contract. One piercing scream, then all is silent save the monster's coils sweeping the

marble floor, and the crush of breaking limbs.

Vata beheld the death of Piromis at the brink of the chasm where it had from the first been the intention of the arch-priest to cast him, if he refused to bend himself to the purposes for which he was admitted within the temple. Already that day had it received one victim. The treacherous Piromis had there engulfed the body of his colleague. The distant land he had gone to was the land of death, and the parting cup had been poisoned.

The multitude in the temple of the monster god filled the mighty space before the veil. It was the gathering of many people; but they were not all worshippers. Every stranger that came to Carthage attended the ceremonial of the Great Serpent, for it was the wonder and marvel of the land. Yet had the deity a crowd of votaries before his awful shrine, who believed in his immortality and his omnipotence.

Old men and youths, wives, maidens, and citizens of the great city, travellers from distant countries, all who worshipped the brazen serpent in all regions of the earth, coming to the temple of the monster, looked on him as an eternal and a living god. The hour for the rising of the veil was long past, and the strangers who worshipped not, murmured, but the worshippers reproved them, and said, "Wait." Then a hoary man, one who had from his youth believed in the infallibility of the monster, supported on the shoulders of those around him, thus spoke.

"Our god is angry, for a woman was early at the shrine with an offering, which she repented her that she had brought to the brazen wicket; and when the priest came, fain would she have held back the child that was honoured by being called to the sacrifice. It was Elisa, the wife of Mago,—Mago who has been smitten by the power of the Great Serpent, and would that the son of his loins should be

an offering for him. Behold the unworthy daughter of Carthage is here: she yet sits on the steps before the wicket, and laments that healing shall come to the lord of her bosom. She would recall the sacrifice from the altar! Men and brethren, strangers and worshippers of the mighty Serpent in all lands, let us slay her in the name of the living, in the name of the brazen god."

Loud and many were the cries that rose from among that angry multitude: "Slay her in the name of the living serpent. Slay her in the name of the brazen god!" and not a few cried out, "Moloch is the god of Carthage! Let there be no sacrifice but to Moloch;" for these came to the temple as unto a show. A hundred hands were stretched out to seize the unhappy mother, and a thousand voices shouted, "Slay her, slay her!"

But a mighty and sonorous crash rang throughout the temple; another, and another yet again; crash following crash, until the

dome rocked with the concussion. Silence,—a death of sound, that fell as a sudden weight on each throbbing heart in that vast multitude, stilling it in breathless awe, succeeded ; then came the instant darkness at the alarum's sound. The sanctuary veil melted into light. But what a scene was there !—altars overthrown, and fire scattered round ;—the brazen serpents hurled from their many shrines ;—the reptile god gorging the slime-washed carcase of his priest. The monster's lengthened bloated form is hewed in twain, the nether end quivering with life at the feet of Vata ;—the body log-like ; the gullet working, yet the throes of death drawing its shapeless prey within the yawning jaws ; and with a ponderous sword there Vata stands, the weapon of the sanctuary poised in his grasp ; the sole defence of Piromis against the snake his skill had subjugated, too late, for that juggling priest had fallen on the reptile. The burst of acclamation which marked the drawing of the veil, ere eye had

caught the havock within the sanctuary, changed to a mighty cry of horror and of vengeance: but Vata mounted on the divan which had once held the serpent god, and waved his hand as though he would address the yelling people. The language of the Phœnicians was not unknown to him, and as the crowd hushed itself in wondering silence, thus he spoke:—"Behold your god, ye men of Carthage! the immortal slain, the oracle silent, and the arch-priest,—the juggler, who spoke lies unto the people in right of their dumb deity,—behold him here! The god was worthy of his minister, and both have perished. Let the altars fall that have not power to stand when smitten. Weep, Carthage, weep! mourn o'er the broken chains that fettered noble minds,—or cry with me, 'down with the gods of men!'"

As the tornado from the murmur of wind and wave rises to the storm-burst, so with sudden swell had the communings of many voices risen to yells and imprecations as Vata

spoke. "Down with the blasphemer!"—"Away with the slayer of our god!"

'Twas well the iron net-work of the sanctuary withstood the first wild assault of the bigot worshippers of the Great Serpent. But other cries had risen mingling with the angry shout for vengeance;—"The slayer of the snake is a god; hear him—hear him!"—"Moloch is the god of Carthage!"—"Down with the temple of the false god!" The well-known love of plunder which belonged to the Punic character was beginning to manifest itself. The treasury of the serpent had justly the reputation of containing vast and precious stores. All thought of Vata,—who, excited by the success of his self-appointed mission, dared the martyrdom which appeared to await him,—was lost when the cry of "To the treasury! to the treasury of the false god!" directed the efforts of the multitude to destroy the screen which divided them from the interior of the temple. It at length yielded; but they found a greater destroyer

than Vata, “the leveller of altars,” in possession of the building. Flames were spreading through the sanctuary: the fire scattered from the shrines had ignited the divan of the serpent, and the loud roaring of the angry element was as though another demon-god had taken possession of the temple. The fire was subdued, and the eager multitude swept on, ripe for the pillage. Those who yet believed the monster-snake a god, had turned away, unable to defend, unwilling to behold his sanctuary desecrated. But there was one who stirred not from her post,—the brazen wicket. Elisa heard the wild shouts of the crowd condemning her to death;—she felt iron hands of ruthless men upon her;—the thunder of the falling shrines had given her freedom—other cries had risen, and she strove to look upon the altars—one glance was all she gained amid that struggling host. Where was her child?—she saw him not: she sunk once more to the earth. The living flood sweeps by her. Here would

she stay ; here had she seen her treasure last. The wicket opens ;—the mother's head is raised ;—Vata approaches ;—the boy is in his arms !

Vata is again upon the ocean. He had conducted Elisa to Mago's house. Strange are the workings of the mind, for they can even overpower disease. The merchant had faith in the offering of his son to the serpent, and his pain had subsided. The child had been restored to him, and Vata proved to the fulness of his comprehension that he had worshipped a false god. The pains came not again, and Mago was well from that hour.

Vata is upon the ocean ;—the vast inland sea that washes the heart of nations. He sails in a ship that has rich freight from the stores of his friend the merchant of Carthage ; who has bidden the captain of the bark show him strange lands where the Phœnicians trade. They pass the pillars of Hercules, and a storm

arises,—a mighty storm, that rocks the straining ship. She drives from her course along the Afric coast. Long did the winds and the waters combat, and the crew call upon their gods to help them. Neptune and Triton heard them not; even Cælestes, though she looked down on them in the watches of the night, seemed hurrying away amid the clouds of Heaven. Then did the sailors come to their captain, asking him to slay Vata. They said he was a strange man, who believed not in their gods; and that the storm was the voice of the mighty ones, who asked for the sacrifice of the despiser. The master of the vessel was loath to kill the friend of Mago; and he temporised with his people, saying, “We will not slay him, but we will put him in a boat, and if a sea engulf him, his blood will not be on our heads.” Vata knew not that they were compassing his death. He looked upon the swelling waves; he listened to the voice of the winds, and he wondered that such an awful power

had sprung from nothing. Yet believed he not a God.

Whatever impressions the last words of the Druid Maelfryddin might have left on his mind, had been effaced by the priestcraft jugglery of the serpent temple. His abhorrence of superstition and cruel rites had stifled in his heart the voice of the divinity, whose cry may not be mocked in vain. The witness, which throughout the course of time, in every nation, every worship, every land, has said there is a god, Vata believed not. Like the stag when the dogs are on his haunches—like the tiger when the hunters are around him,—struggled Vata with the mariners, but in vain.

Small and frail was the boat into which he was thrust; the sailors regarded neither his threats nor his remonstrances. They looked on him as one whom the gods hated, and they left him to his fate.

“This is a strange land, where man is not,” said Vata, “the leveller of altars.” “Mighty forests are around me; I hear not the blow of the feller of trees; the sea washes the foot of the mountains, and borders the green sward of many a plain with its glistening shells. I see not the abode of the habitants. I am alone in this vast solitude, save the monsters of the woods, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the earth. Here there are no worshippers of fancied deity;—no priests to stand between man and self-possession, making the free of nature slaves to the supernatural. I am alone, and I would have it so. If all communities must serve a god, he only has liberty who weareth not the chains of fellowship.”

Vata, buffeted by the waves till the destruction of his fragile ark left him a waif amid the waters, had been cast on Africa's western shores. Thus he spake, and he re-

joiced that there was no voice to answer. Vata was now a journeyer through a land where man had not made his abode. Why did he wander on? The earth gave him of her fruits, and, with a stone from his sling, he could fell the bird and the lesser beast for food: sweet waters were in many a stream, and the forest and the cave might have made him a home. Vata, though he would have spoken peace to his own heart, and said, here, where there is no worship and no man to deceive, let me dwell, had that curse of wandering which belongs to an unquiet spirit. The love of kind is of nature; the sophistry of false reasoning, the pride of independence, even the sense of injury, can but seldom make a misanthrope. Vata climbed the sides of a mighty mountain, that he might look if the sea were near him, for he had now travelled far and wide in the land. A cloud of mist was at his feet;—it passed away as though a thin veil had been drawn from

before him, and he beheld the mighty ocean;—calm, as if guiltless of storm or wreck, its waves reflected the brightness of Heaven. Here, even here, was joy to the wanderer. The sea of Africa seemed the sea of Britain, and brought a throb to the stern heart of Vata, which belonged to thoughts of other days. But see, a forest glade opens in the distance; huts are there studding the green-sward, like ant-hills on a plain. Vata forgets that he has done with man. A crowd of natives gather on the shore, and quickly he descends, once more to claim the rights of brotherhood. He was yet far from the assembled multitude, when he saw the moving mass separate;—group by group, and one by one, did the people of that vast crowd fall away, till the sea had again a lonely strand.

Vata paused, and looked eagerly towards a low point of beach over which the tide was fast rising. What is it that has caught the quick eye of the wanderer? One solitary

being stands with outstretched arms, as if inviting the waves to circle round her. Ah ! that scream — that impotent struggle ! It is not a willing immolation. Man, man — is there no race on the fair earth but worships as a god some imagined deity that doth delight in sufferings ? This — this must be a sacrifice ! Thus exclaiming, Vata rushed towards the beach. At the extremity of the promontory which he had still to traverse, a female form was bound to the trunk of a tree ; gaudy feathers, flaunting in the sea-breeze, decked the woodland altar, which had just been reared by the natives of the land to some ocean god. The victim was fairer than the dark people of that region. Vata could almost have imagined that he beheld a maiden from the shores of Cernyw. She sees the approach of a deliverer, — for such does the speed of the stranger lead her to imagine him, — she calls aloud for help. Vata

knew not the words she spoke, but the language of her distress was eloquent. Help!—it will be too late. The waters are around her,—now they rise with bubbling turmoil, as though some hidden fire boiled up the depths of ocean. A hundred snake-like arms, from one vast body, curl upon the waves; they stretch towards the victim;—an instant more and the slimy feelers of the giant Sepia, the myriad suckers blistering where they cling, will clasp around her. But Vata has reached the altar; he tears it from the beach, and the monster, with the instinct of its nature, casts a shower of ink-like fluid towards the prey which has escaped him.

The shore is gained, and Vata, the solitary Vata, once more has found a being to love. The grateful girl pointed to a distant range of hills, and spoke words which her rescuer understood not. Love hath a universal language in the eyes, but cannot teach it to the tongue.

Vata obeyed the appeal, and together they journeyed toward the land in which was her home.

Vata, the deliverer of Berminda, brought the maiden to the abode of her father. She was the daughter of Tandogar, a king ruling the land of Biasara, and had been taken captive in an onslaught of the negroes: these hated the people over whom her sire reigned, as coming of a stranger race, who in ancient days had left a country beyond the great seas, and were cast on the Afric shores.

The old king rejoiced at the recovery of his child; and having no son, he adopted the bold stranger, and gave Berminda to him as a wife. Thus Vata became a chief in the land;—Tandogar died, and Vata was king in his stead.

Well did he love Berminda, and worthy was she of his love,—for she was good and gentle,—moreover her beauty was such as no

man could look upon and not love. But Berminda had one sorrow,—it was this :—her lord would not worship in the temple of her god, the god of Biasara.

When the old king, Tandogar, was placed in the tomb of his fathers, and Vata was declared king, then did his wife plead with him that he would stand in the temple,—even as her sire had stood,—and bow before an altar that was not defiled with blood, but had been built round a lambent flame, which had ever burnt since the race which peopled Biasara had come as strangers to the land. The priests of the temple of the sacred fire were good men and wise; they taught that God was a spirit, but that it was well to worship him with a visible worship, lest men should forget there was a God. Their altar was fed with fragrant woods, and the offerings of the people were the fruits of the earth. Young maidens brought garlands and laid them on the shrine; and no man commenced or ended

any great work till he had presented himself in the temple and asked a blessing on his labours. All this Vata knew, yet he turned from Berminda when she said unto him,—
“Now thou art the king of our country, and must worship as we worship, lest our priests say that thou dost not believe in a God.”

“The priests of the temple are old men, and babblers; they talk of that which they know not,” said Vata, when Berminda hung upon his arm, and besought him to listen to her.—“If I believe in a god, it is a god that liveth not in temples. Nations are around me who worship the shark and the monster whose food thou wouldst have been, had I not delivered thee from that peril. Lands are on our borders where mis-shapen logs, made hideous that they may have the greater reverence, are believed in as gods. The altars of all these deities will I destroy; and shall the country which I rule worship the fiery breathings of the earth? I

will visit thy temple, but it will not be to bow before a flickering flame. The fire shall be extinguished." As if struck by the stroke of death, Berminda fell to the ground. Vata raised her in his arms, and by his caresses restored her to sense; but he unsaid not that which he had spoken.

With his own hand he overthrew the altar, and he choked the flame in the ruins of its shrine. Yet did the deep sorrow of Berminda rise to his thoughts; and thus he spoke unto the priests, who in amazement had beheld his work of destruction: "Let it not be said that I deny thy god; I have only destroyed that which thou callest his symbol; let those who will, worship the reality: but am I not king of this land? and shall there be an altar and a flame to which man shall bow? I have been in many countries, and in all I have visited is the worship of God made a profit unto priests, and a snare unto the people. Go ye, therefore, and if ye will, tell all men that thy temple is

a desolation ; thy shrine overthrown ; thy fire extinguished ; and Vata, ‘the leveller of altars,’ bids ye proclaim, that if there be a God, he hath no regard to the ordinances of worship.”

Vata was wise in his own conceit, for he had seen much ; yet his experience had only taught him to avoid the quicksand and the rock ; but the haven of rest he knew not. He was lost on a sea of strange thoughts ; though a time was coming when he would no longer deny, but doubt.

The temple was thrown open, so that the beasts of the fields might there make an abode ; the fire was choked in the fall of its altar ; and Berminda wept that the religion of the land was as nought. But Vata comforted her, saying, “ Let those who would worship a deity, find his temple in their own hearts ; all else is priestcraft. I have not denied the god of Biasara, and I have not wronged him.”

The patient wife would have believed the words of her husband, and fondly did she

imagine that he was not a despiser of all gods.

Vata had not long taken upon himself the rule of the land, when the fiery zeal which seldom slumbered within his heart, burst forth. War, cruel war, he waged, which carried death and desolation through the neighbouring nations. Chiefs and their warriors, princes and people, bowed before the prowess of his arms. He fought not for territory ;—he fought not in remembrance of ancient feuds ;—no ; his war was against altars, and many were his triumphs, for many were the shrines he overthrew.

Vata, “the leveller of altars,” had returned to Biasara with a victorious army ; but a change had come over the land. Sedition and tumult were rife ;—fraud and violence walked at noon-day, nor asked of night a mantle for misdeeds. But Berminda was unchanged : she came to meet her lord with all the freshness of woman’s love ; that life-elixir of the heart, which gives perpetual youth to her affections.

Vata was cold towards his faithful wife: he heard of treachery in trusted friends, — of broken faith in men of once fair renown, — and in the bitterness of his soul he turned away from one who alone had kept the pledge of fidelity. “This is no time for gentle thoughts!” exclaimed the returned conqueror. “Biasara once rose amid the nations a light by which all might see their imperfections in contrast with our happy land; — now the laws are broken, — laws that were in disuse from lack of grave offences, — the cry of violence, the cry of blood, which once would have roused the nation, as one man, to disclaim against the doer of the wrong, is now become a sound familiar.” Berminda would have spoken of certain sayings of the ancient men, priests of the temple, whom her lord had driven forth; but dark were the clouds on Vata’s brow, and who might speak when thus he looked? Yet did those sayings reach his ear; for Vata called to him all the

counsellors the treachery of the time had left. Chiefs and warriors, and a vast assembly of wondering people, from all parts of Biasara, were gathered round him. Vata had proclaimed a hall of justice. Then forth came from amidst the crowd an aged man, whose beard reached to his girdle. Thus he spoke : —“ I was a priest of the temple, Vata, when thy hand overthrew the holy altar where the faithful of the land bowed down—not to the sacred flame, but to the Spirit that had lighted it. Thou didst declare that worship should be alone offered to an invisible—an unknown deity. Our altar was uprooted, and our temple desecrated. Vata, look around ! —where is the worship of thy God invisible ? Rapine and murder are not of his ordinances. The liar and the cheat are not of his people. The god we spoke of to the land is as a dream that is past. This hast thou done ;—behold thy recompence in a nation’s ruin.”

Vata had heard the old man, if not patiently,

at least in silence. It is hard for the proud mind to bear reproof. With a burst of rage, more stormy from the slow gathering of his wrath, the altar-leveller justified his deeds. While yet he spoke, a shout—a mighty shout, arose from out the crowd. The hand which Vata held in menace toward the priest he wildly clenched, and shook above his head in anger at the boldness of his people.

But now while acclamations burst from all around, he learns the reason of the cry. The fire has rekindled in the temple. The priests are gathering round it; and he who so boldly reprov'd his king, rushes from the hall of audience unscathed for his presumption. The eager multitude have gone forth; but Vata has yet his chiefs around him, and to them he turns. “Now, warriors, men of Biasara!” exclaimed the desperate man, — “now be the trial if this idle flame—this priestly juggle, or I, the king, shall rule the land.”

The altar is upreared ; — the sacred fire burns brightly ; — priests stand around hymning their praises to the god who has justified himself in the sight of his enemies. A mighty crowd, no longer worshippers, but a gaping multitude, who come to wonder—not adore, have filled the temple. Now resounds from without a lengthened shout ; it is the war-whoop of the warriors.

Vata is at their head, as if he led them on against the foemen of the land. They burst into the sanctuary. The “leveller of altars” points to the flame, as with a voice of thunder he exclaims, “Who has dared to raise the fire I had conquered ? Now be the mandate of thy king obeyed !—out with the flame !—stifle it with the ruins of its shrine ! Listen, ye people ! be it known throughout the land—Vata has said it — there is no God !”

The altar was once more overthrown ; but now the blaze remained not choked amid the

portions of stone which fell into the hollow of its bed,—these glowed with heat and added to the fire.

The priests, uttering a loud wail at the destruction of the shrine, fled ; but the people reiterated the cry of their king : “ There is no God ! ” — “ Root up the juggling cheat ! ” shouted the desecrator, maddened in the pride of his heart ; and many were the swords that reddened in the sacred flame.

Vata rushed towards the brink of the widening crater, and hurled the last portion of the altar into the gulf ;—but see, like a column of refulgent light rises the fire ; like a meteor does it burst, scattering chiefs, warriors, and people. But where is Vata ? scorched and almost blinded he has fled ; the flames are spreading round ; the cry of the people is like the death-wail of a nation. Berminda has sought her lord,—together do they fly from the burning. They look toward the site of the temple—a globe of fire glows in its stead—

a sea of flame is swelling round the refulgent orb.

“What hast thou done, my Vata?” said the affrighted wife. “The people call on thee as the worker of this ruin.” Vata spoke not. “Tell me, my beloved, what mean these dreadful flames?—why may we not seek our home?”

“Thy home, Berminda, is with the homes of my people—in the flood of flame.” Thus said Vata, finding again the voice that seemed to have been dried up by the fire-burst from the shrine. “Behold the woods that were our pride,—they are crackling in the burning; behold the plains in which we delighted,—they are spread with the glowing wave! Fly, Berminda! fly! It curls round yonder hill! To the mountain!—to the mountain!” and Vata hurried the bewildered woman onward. They fled from the flood of flame.

The sun set, yet darkness came not;—that

fire of destruction was light to the fugitives. Still they fled, but Berminda's steps were failing. In vain did her lord point to the coming flame—not a mile was it distant;—on, on it moved, curling like the rollers of the ocean with the roar as of a mighty wind.

“Vata, here I die;” and Berminda, sinking to the earth, bade her husband speed his flight. “Perchance,” said the faithful wife, “our god, whom thou hast outraged, may be appeased. Let me be the sacrifice, that thou mayest live.”

“There is no God!” shouted the impious Vata, stretching his clenched hand towards the avenging fires. “There is no God!” Was he mad in the agony of his grief? No; Vata was not mad; but in his zeal against the altars of blood he had stifled the voice of the deity in his heart.

The sun rose on a land that mocked its brightness: the sea had followed on the course of the destroying flame, and a continent was

overwhelmed by fire and flood. Yet was there a haven for the fugitives. A mountain was before them. Vata bore Berminda in his arms ; —she was doubly endeared to him by suffering. He would not forsake her, but he saw that their journey was nearly at an end. The head of Berminda rested on his shoulder, and the wife spoke to her husband of the God whom he denied. Slowly did conviction come to the man of pride ; but at length it did come.

The fugitives reached the foot of the mountain, and without looking back, advanced in their ascent.

“ Dost thou then believe, Vata, that there is a God who created and who governs the earth ? ”

“ I believe,” answered the once bold questioner of Deity.

He felt the lips of Berminda pressed to his cheek ; —the burthen had become heavier, —her spirit had fled. Vata placed the corpse of his wife gently on the earth, and prayed that the destroyer of shrines reared to cruel gods, might

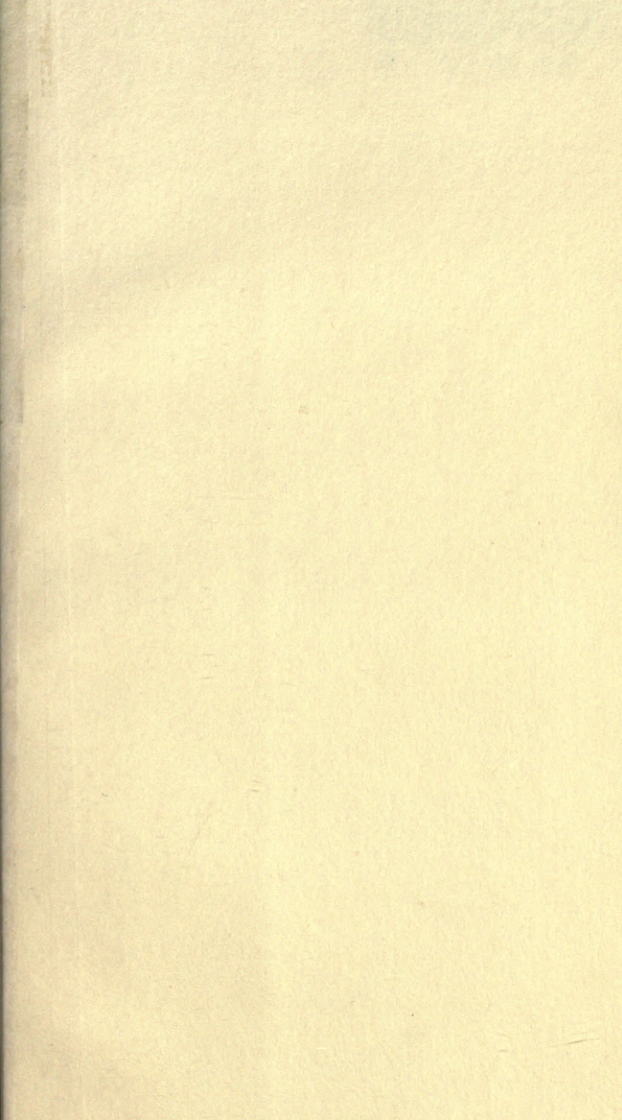
find favour in the sight of a Deity of mercy. Prostrate on the ground he awaited the flood of flame; but it came not; and when he again arose he beheld that the waters had spread over all the plains,—the fire was quenched, and he was on a fair island.

And Vata buried Berminda on the mountain where he had learned to pray, and there did he raise an altar to the Unknown God.

THE END.

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